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THE
INVASION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE COLLEGIANS," &c.

Gerald Griffin

One foot on sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Shakspeare.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1832.

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v. 1

unpublished - 721
12/10/11

P R E F A C E.

IT would be dealing unjustly both by reader and author to suffer the former to take up these volumes under the idea that he is about to peruse a historical novel. That branch of literature has, within our own day, attained a rank in which, we are sensible, the present performance could not, for an instant, maintain its ground. To the absorbing interest excited by deep passion, dramatic dialogue, and highly wrought narrative, these volumes have not a pretension. Their most ambitious aim is that of presenting a correct

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picture of the surface of society in part of England, in Ireland, and in northern Europe, at an obscure period of the history of mankind; and offering at the same time a slight sketch of individual character in the two persons whose story forms the connecting feature of the work.

The accuracy which we have endeavoured to use in the delineation of manners could hardly be extended to the necessary historical allusions, for not only is the chronology of the period exceedingly confused, but many of the persons and events alluded to are so much a subject of antiquarian controversy, as to leave their very existence problematical. This remark refers particularly to the scene of the Roilich na Riogh, or the Sepulchre of Kings, which, as the observant reader

will immediately perceive, has been introduced, not with the view of assuming the authenticity of those works in which the reigns of the different monarchs are recorded, but for the purpose of presenting a general sketch of the early progress of the isle in the arts of war and peace. With respect to the time embraced by the work itself, we may aver, without fear of any antiquary's censure, that there is no historical event introduced into the narrative which did not at least occur within a few years of the period to which it is referred; and this, considering the remoteness of the time, may be deemed sufficient for a work of fiction.

There is another class of readers to whom likewise some apology may be due, for the absence of many venerable

attractions which they have been accustomed to meet in those works of imagination whose authors have already chosen to treat of the manners of the middle ages : “ *ces temps*,” says the accomplished Sismondi, “ *que le plus grand historien de nos jours a appelés les siècles du mérite ignoré*.” We allude to that numerous body, the sum of whose historical knowledge is derived from the circulating library and the minor theatre, and who will no doubt be surprised to meet, perhaps for the first time in a tale of the Carlovingian days, a chieftain whose limbs do not clank at every motion in a suit of Dr. Meyrick’s genuine antiques ; who seeks to improve his people by the arts of peace, and to strengthen their power by means somewhat more reputable than those of a Freney or O’Hanlon ; a convent which

does not in all points resemble an eccentric club, in which the public entrance is at least as much in request as the postern gate, and in which there is not even a hint of a subterranean passage; an abbot, whose *contour* is somewhat less than civic; monks who are not at all times absorbed in the joys of the larder and the wine-cellar; hermits who have not all been crossed in love before they took the vows, and nuns who do not invariably listen to serenades at night, and elope with young light-horsemen. To such readers how will it excuse us that, in venturing to dispense with those long-established and inexhaustible sources of mirth and wit, we have endeavoured to substitute actual for fictitious manners, that from the form of a government to the shape of a mantle, we

have sought to ground what we advance upon authentic sources ; and that, instead of presenting a romance of love, of magic, of highway-robbery, or of knight-errantry, we have endeavoured to lay before the reader a tale of real life of the middle ages ? a task perhaps more arduous, as it is more new, than a work of a purely imaginative character.

To those who, like the mechanical citizen in Zeluco, can only relish that to which they are *accustomed*, the very novelty, which many consider an attraction, may appear a disadvantage, and that which is strange as necessarily fictitious. It may thus happen, that in sacrificing effect for the sake of accuracy, we may lose credit even for the humble merit which we claim. To readers of this class we can only say,

that from the really well-informed we fear nothing; from the ignorant every thing. So far have we been from suffering any national predilections to influence the colouring of the scenes we endeavour to depict, that, in deference to the prepossessions of such readers, we have, generally speaking, subdued them to a standard far below the reality. Let such readers, therefore, before they undertake to censure, examine, without prejudice, the existing records of those days, and they will find that the truth is strange, stranger than our fiction.

Thus much we have thought it necessary to say, in order to provide against the consequences of critical disappointment in a performance, the materials of which have been collected with no small care and pains, though it is

possible they have been used with little force or skill. It was necessary, in appearing at the bar of criticism, that our plea should be correctly understood, lest we might happen to be tried upon a charge which did not enter into the indictment. The tale offers little more, with regard to contrivance of plot or design, than the fictitious memoir of a native of England, of Ireland, and of Sweden, during those years which immediately preceded and followed the death of Charlemagne, whose fortunes, together with those of other incidental characters, are involved in the historical event which forms the catastrophe of the work, and from which the tale derives its name. With respect to the event itself, some English chronicles mention a northern chief, named Gurmund, who landed on

the Irish coasts, long ere the successful invasion of that isle by the Norwegian Thorgils; the Irish annalists likewise record an invasion previous to that of the Norwegian, on the western coasts of Munster; which was repelled by the promptitude of Airtree, the monarch of Leath Mogha. This unsuccessful invasion constitutes the event on which the tale is founded, and finding no record of the name of its conductor, we have used that of Gurmund, leaving the authenticity of those portions of the English chronicles, in which his story is related, to the discussion of antiquaries. Some of the characters, such as Duach, Eogan Bel, Ferreis, Yrling, Ailred and his household, &c., are intended slightly to illustrate, in the bud, those national peculiarities which have since become more strikingly de-

veloped ; while others, touched with a still lighter pencil, bear a more general relation to human nature.

And now, gentle critic, whether borne in the state carriage of a solemn quarterly, figuring in the elegant pages of a monthly magazine, or in the lighter columns of a weekly journal, we commit our volumes to your inspection with one parting charge ; be just, but be candid. Do not, either from indolence or prejudice, decry what has been constructed with care and study, and remember that what is uninteresting to one class of readers, may be useful to another. If it appears to you, that we pause too long on questions of law and government, remember that there are Irish readers who may not regret to find embodied, in a work of imagination, a synopsis of the early constitu-

tion, and of the moral history of their native land, and who may regard with an interest more permanent, if not more exciting, than that which addresses itself to the passions, an attempt at tracing, to their remotest origin, some of the influences which have concurred in the formation of the national character.

THE INVASION.

CHAPTER I.

IN the reign of Niall Frassach, king of Ireland, the second Ard-righ of that name, and of the Heremonian line, there stood on the shores of Inbhersceine,* not far from the beautiful inlet of Glengariff, the dwelling of O'Haedha, the chief of that Ithian race. He had been contracted early in life to Matha, elder daughter of O'Driscol,

* Bantry-bay.

the Canfinny, or head of the sept so named, which was another branch of the same Milesian stock.

The sun of a summer day had risen over the summit of Sliabh Owen, and the first breeze of morning had brushed the surface of the bay, when almost all the population of the sept of O'Haedha had assembled in the valley of Rath-Aidan. By the gay and eager faces of the multitude, and the frequent jests that passed from lip to lip, it might be judged that the occasion was a festive one. The gates of the Rath stood open, and were guarded by two lines of armed galloglachs, who restrained the crowd, and kept an open space clear, as if for some expected cavalcade. The sound of the piobh mala, a kind of droneless pipe, somewhat resembling the national instrument of the Scottish highlands, the fuller tone of the adharcaidh ciuil, or musical horn, and other wind instruments, were heard from various recesses

of the valley, and every sight and sound betokened the commencement of some splendid pageant.

At length, the long, loud note of a single goll-trompa from the Rath, produced an instant stillness through the multitude. It was succeeded by a sudden shout so stunning and so universal, that the sea-fowl wheeled and screamed in startled flocks along the shore, and the echo muttered like thunder among the distant peaks of Sliabh Miskisk. All eyes were instantly turned on the open gateway. The double line of the course which the procession was expected to take, seemed as if walled on either side, with heads and necks stretched out, with gaping faces, and with staring eyes. Some ran in groups to the summits of surrounding eminences; some scrambled to the roofs of the scattered shielings* and peillices† of the valley; and mothers were seen

* Cottages.

† Sheds.

holding their infants high above their heads, that the babes might look upon their chieftain, and behold the spectacle from which they were themselves shut out.

After a brief interval, the expected procession was seen to issue from the gateway, and was hailed with shouts more loud and stunning than before. First came a troop of fifty marc-sliagh, or cavalry, headed by the Fear Comhlan Cao-guid, or lieutenant, and the standard-bearer, holding aloft the banner of the sept. Their shining cathbhars and brazen headed spears reflected in long and brilliant gleams the rays of the arising sun. Next came a carbudh, highly adorned, and drawn by a pair of the high-spirited Asturcones, a native breed, remarkable for fleetness in the chase and ardour in the combat. The reins were held by O'Haedha (so named by way of emphasis), who sat alone in the chariot, in the bloom

of manly beauty, and in all the magnificence of festal costume. The young chieftain wore on his head a barrad, or bonnet, edged with a band of gold, from under which his hair flowed over his neck and shoulders in abundant ringlets. The close-fitting truis, a kind of plaided hose, displayed the symmetry of his well-shaped limbs; and a cochal, or short cloak, of a rich green colour, was bound upon his breast with a golden brooch. Beside him was an empty seat, ere long to be occupied by the chosen lady of the sept. The remembrance of his ancient lineage, the actions of his ancestry, and his own manly virtues, enkindled the enthusiasm of his people, when they saw him leave his dwelling on this festive occasion; and the shouts of "O'Haedha! O'Haedha a-bo!" arose like the roar of a tempestuous ocean from the vale. The chieftain smiled, and waved his hand in answer to the stormy

greeting, and moved slowly on, like the commanding genius of the tumult, while his horses reared their heads, and shook the plumes in the golden headstalls of their bridles, as if they shared the general exultation.

Behind the chief rode one who did not meet the same devoted welcome from his assembled kinsmen. It was Baseg, the brother of the chief, and thanist, or legal heir to his title and power, though not to his possessions. He was a man of large person, but pale and ill-featured, and with a discontented cast of eye that almost bordered on melancholy. His dwelling was in a lonely hold near the foot of Gormadark ; but Conall, the chieftain, who loved him both on account of the natural bond, and for his dauntless valour in the field, prevailed on him to take apartments in the Rath, which he was now, however, determined to resign.

Next came, on horseback, with a face of deep solemnity and wisdom, Fighnin, the hereditary physician of the tribe, a man of middle age, followed by three daltadhs, or pupils, each of whom strove to emulate with all his might the grave and potent aspect of his master. They were followed by the brehoun, or lawyer of the sept, a man proficient in all the laws of life and property, megbote, manbote, and fredun, thanistry, gavel-kind, mustrowne, south, assaut, bode, garty, cean, byenge, slanciagh, shragh, and a thousand other details of the ancient code of Inisfail. Beside him rode Fearchorb, the senachie, a man of powerful memory, who could trace the genealogy of the sept, in all its numerous branches, not only up to Ith, their great Milesian ancestor, but from him, in the clearest manner, to Adam, the father of the human race. Next came, with pleasant countenance and quiet, observing eye,

the dresbdeartach, or story-teller, rich in legends of Concullion and the race of Irish giants, fairies, and the Fionn Eirin, the heroes of Irish chivalry and romance. He was followed by Conla, the filea, or poet, whose duty it was to attend his chieftain at the festival, on the march, and even in the field of battle ; to cheer him at evening with songs in praise of his ancestry ; to animate him in the combat by recalling their achievements in his verse ; and to sing the caoine, or death song, at his burial. None was more profoundly skilled than Conla in the hundred modes of verse invented by the Irish bards, or deeper in the mysteries of the *Uraiceacht na Neaigios*, or rules for the poet, invented by the bard Forchern. Beside the son of song, and dressed like him in a canabhas, or robe of white, rode the crotarie, whose clarsech, or harp, suspended from his neck in front, gave indication of his popular calling. Few merited better than old

Diermodh and his companion the praise which was already given to Irish minstrelsy, nor can we deny the isle its tuneful eminence, when we remember that, even earlier than Conla's day, the royal benefactress of the abbey of Neville in France, supplied its choir from those of Inisfail; that its poetry captivated the fancy of a Spenser; and its music drew eloquent applause from the prejudiced lips of a Cambrensis. The minstrels were followed by a few tiarnas, or subordinate governors of townships under the chieftain, and the tioseachs, or leaders of his military force. The procession was closed by a troop of fifty hobbelers, or light horse, whose weapons were the brazen-headed javelin, a small bow, not more than three quarters of a yard in length, bent with a hempen string, and a quiver of arrows with heads as slender and almost as sharp as a lancet. By every horseman ran a daltin, dressed in a saffron cota, and armed with

a dart ; their duty it was to attend to the comforts of the animal, and, at times, to join the combat.

Having left the valley amid the prolonged and reiterated shouts of the united sept, the gay procession directed its course southwards, and arrived ere noon on the shores of the little promontory of Affadown. The isles of Sperkin and Inis-Driscol lay on either hand, their woody shores reflected in the tranquil waters, and farther out at sea appeared the sunlit hills of Cleir, where stood the principal dwelling of O'Driscol. A horseman, standing on the shore, blew a long blast at the command of his chieftain on the trompa : it was echoed far along the shore and over the calm ocean, which soon was covered at a distance by a fleet of currachs, coities, noevogs, and those small floating cribs invented by Eochaidh Uarcheas, for the purpose of landing his troops

on stormy and rock-bound coasts. They were manned by hardy fishermen of the sept of O'Driscol, gaily dressed for the occasion, and dipping their oars to the sound of the pipe, the corn-bean, and the fideog. In the foremost of these festal barges, O'Haedha recognized the figure of O'Driscol Oge, the warlike and accomplished son of the old Canfinny. He sprung on shore almost at the same instant that O'Haedha alighted from his carbudh, and they met with cordial and delighted looks. O'Driscol Oge, or, as he was more generally named from an unusual length of arm, Sior-lamh, after rallying the bridegroom on the paleness of his countenance, admitted that he showed more ardour in his movements than his aspect, for none of the expected guests had yet arrived in the island. Before he entered the little barge, O'Haedha handed to the lieutenants a pouch of silver scru-

bals (a small coin of the island) to distribute amongst the men, with orders to take back the chariot and the horses of the bridal party, and to celebrate the nuptials at Rath-Aidan with the great body of the sept.

They put off from shore, and were received with open welcome at the gates of Cleir by the venerable Canfinny and his white-haired spouse, who were arrayed in such attire as became their rank, their years, and the occasion. The chieftain wore around his neck the golden *fleasg*, or torques, which announced his claim to the title of Ridaire, or knight. It was an ornament similar to that used by the Gaulish equites of the period, and which obtained for Manlius Torquatus his memorable agnomen. The aged lady of the sept wore on her head a kind of turban of the finest linen, from which her long white hair hung down in plaited wreaths, and her person, tall and

stately, notwithstanding her great age, had an air of dignity, the effect of high descent, and of habitual command, such as we might imagine of Volumnia. Around this venerable pair stood a crowd of blooming children from the age of sixteen to eight, of both sexes, and all partaking of that princely air which sat so easy on the aged parents, and which was unmingled with the slightest taint of pride. The elder sisters were yet retired with Matha, the bride, in an inner apartment, to which O'Haedha was conducted by her brother soon after his arrival.

In the course of the day the shores of the islet were crowded by the other leading members of the various Ithian septs. O'Baire, O'Ciaran, Mac Crothan, O'Breogan, O'Flanarda, O'Kerwic, O'Deada, Mac Craith, O'Kowig, O'Leary, O'Ceily, and other chiefs of the race, displayed their banners in honour of the occasion, from the

earthen ramparts of the Canfinny's hold. To these, in friendly alliance, were added the dreaded banners of the race of the unhappy Eogan, whose descendants ruled that portion of Dheas Muimhean* which was not in the possession of the Ithians. Mac Carthy More, O'Sullivan of the Glens, O'Donoghue, the lord of fair Loch Lene,† O'Connel, O'Mahonie, Mac Auliffe, and other Eoganacht chiefs, too numerous to name. From far and near, great princes and nobility were met to honour the espousals, and (according to a custom then prevalent in Ireland, as it was amongst the Franks and Germans) to make their splendid offerings to the bride.

The ceremony was performed by the bishop of Ross Ailithri,‡ himself an Ithian, and one of the twelve suffragan dignitaries under the see of

* South Munster, afterwards Desmond.

† Killarney.

‡ Ross.

Caisil.* The bride, having received the marriage dowry from her husband, was with grief resigned to his care by the good Canfinny.

“ I part with thee,” he said, “ as with a score of the years yet left me. May you be long lived, happy, and prosperous. May your hall be ever full, and your cairn be like a mountain when you die.”

The guests soon after came forward with their offerings. The chieftain of the Glens presented to the bride a cross of emeralds, a pair of topaz armlets, a mantle of the richest crimson dye that the moss of Dheas Muimhean could furnish, and bound at the shoulder by an amethyst set in gold. O'Donoghue added to these a ring set with one of the finest pearls that had been ever found in the waters of Lough Lene,† and bracelets adorned with the glittering chrys-

* Cashel.

† Killarney.

tals of Ciar.* The chieftain of the Reeks made his offering of a pair of buskins of the red deer hide, together with four milk-white hobbies, reared in the steep recesses of the Coom Collee; and other guests contributed their portions of the marriage dowry according to their wealth and inclination.

Seated in rings through the extensive building, on beds of rushes, the company of higher rank partook of the festive fare that was prepared for their refreshment. Before them were placed a number of three-legged tables, covered with food of various kinds, bread baked on a griddle, milk-meats in sundry forms, the many species of fish and flesh which the coasts, the hills, and woods of Dairinne could afford, among which might be mentioned as the most delicious, the smelt, the gourder, and the cock of the wood. Attendants,

* Kerry.

in the meantime, handed round beverages of various kinds in vessels more or less costly, according to the quality of the guests. While the Canfinny drank his wine in a cup of gold or silver, the lesser chieftain was content to receive his curmi, a kind of ale, in a vessel of horn or brass. The miodh, a drink resembling the English mead, and the mil-fion, a simple beverage of diluted honey, was circulated among the kernes and galloglachs in cups of ash or sycamore.

The harp, the song, the dance, gave animation to the scene of pleasure. The sun had sunk beyond the western ocean, and rushen torches of prodigious size supplied the absence of his light. The youths and maidens of the surrounding septs glided gracefully through all the tortuous mazes of the national dance, the venerable *rintheadh fadha*. The crotaries, in a corner of the spacious building, delighted the assembly by a har-

monious concert of instruments, of which the names alone have reached the ears of their descendants. The mighty clarsech resounded beneath the shrivelled but nimble fingers of a grey-haired minstrel ; the crotalum, a little bell of silver, tingled in the hand of a fair-faced boy ; the warbling cruit, an instrument between the harp and lute, poured forth its sweet but shrilly symphony ; the many-stringed kiernine gave echo to the flying fingers of a white-robed musician ; the golden crotalin, or cymbal, flew gleaming with a noisy melody around the head and person of a youthful bard ; here rolled the tiompan, or kettle-drum, there rose the tenor of the cionan, or ten-stringed violin, while the deep-toned murmur of the cream-thine added its harmonious bass to the merry measure of the *geantraighe*, the festive mode which the minstrels had selected for the bridal eve.

On the green without the building the kernes

and galloglachs, the neighbouring fuidirs, or cottagers, and other guests, old and young, of both sexes, and of humbler rank, pursued their mirth with greater freedom, though with lesser splendour, and danced as merrily, though to the sound of coarser minstrelsy. The rising moon gave light to their festivity, and the chorus of wind instruments (the horror of the fine-eared cro-taries and educated harpers) inspired their vigorous movements. The wild stuic sent its blast over the tranquil waters; the winding adharcaidh ciuil, a kind of hautboy, awoke the echoes of the shore; the shrill piob-mala, or droneless bagpipe, contributed its monotonous treble; the dudog, the lonloingean, the adharc, the cuisleigh ciuil, the fideog, the corn-bean, and other instruments of wind music, some played with the readan, or mouth-piece, and some without, all joined in loud and mirthful chorus, resounding far away

among the hills and through the breathless woods.

Late at night, when the dancers made a pause, the aged ard-filea, or chief bard of the sept of O'Driscol, was invited to fill up the interval in the evening's pleasures. Taking a sweet-toned cruit, the principal crotarie prepared to accompany him in his song. The bard chose for his subject the ancient achievements of the stock from which they were descended. He sang of the invasion of Ith, and of the unhappy fate of that adventurer; of the treacherous hospitality of the three sons of Cearnada; of the fearful retaliation of his Galician brethren; and of the subsequent achievements of the sons of the murdered Milesian. He then changed the style of his eulogy, and in a voice and language of the most expressive sweetness, described the recent progress of the isle in the arts of peace, of science, and of industry.

The fame, he said, of the chiefs of Inisfail, in order to be immortal, no longer needed to be enrolled in characters of blood ; virtue, and not power, had become the object of their emulation. Their glory not diminished, their honour still unstained, the spirit of arms not quenched but purified in its motive, they had begun to prefer independence to dominion, and charity to discord.

CHAPTER II.

THERE was a chieftain present who did not join in the praises that were bestowed on the song of the filea, nor in the gifts which he received from the assembled chiefs. It had also been observed that he did not kneel with the guests during the short prayer which they offered up immediately after the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, nor add his voice to the general response at its termination. To those who enquired into the cause of this singularity it was intimated that the stranger was neither an Eoganacht nor Ithian,

but the chieftain of the Hooded People, a Druid race, so named from a singular costume adopted from their brethren of Conacht, who still preserved, among the mountains in the interior of the country, their ancient rites and customs, and that he acted both as their civil governor and Ard-Draithe, or chief Druid. This was a sufficient explanation of what would otherwise have excited high and indignant feelings ; but O'Haedha, the groom, who was naturally warm-tempered, did not esteem it a good reason for the slight thus offered to O'Driscol's bard.

“ The Ard-Draithe,” said he, “ does not deem the filea's song worth his praise. He has better harping in the Coom na Druid.”

“ The voice is good, and the harping too,” replied the Druid chief. “ The Christain boasts a little ; that is all.”

O'Haedha unfortunately afforded a proof that

the Ard-Draithe's words were just. He entered into an altercation with the latter, which, but for the interposition of the bishop of Ross Ailithri, and the Canfinny himself, would have ended, even on the spot, in mortal combat. As it was, high taunts were uttered, and high menaces exchanged, and the wrath of the Druid was inflamed to the highest by a stinging allusion made by O'Haedha to the descent of the former from Cinsellach of the Shameful Head, a warrior who had dishonoured his name and arms by killing a bard on the field of battle.

“Thy people,” said the Ard-Draithe, “will never be content. They have driven us from Tamrach; they have driven us from Cruachan; and they envy us our lonely retreat among the hills. Our power is gone, and they would take our name and fame along with it. But let them look to it. If the fire of Bel no longer burn upon

the altars of Tlachta, it is still unquenched ; and the time may come when the votaries of bright Samhuin may worship by her light once more within the groves of Uisneach. The chiefs whose praise the bard has sung so well were Ithians, it is true, but they were fire adorers too, and would have blushed to share the sluggish praise of their posterity. But fare thee well, proud chieftain, thou hast taunted me with the blemish of my blood. See that the current of thine own flows undisturbed."

He departed from the festival, not heeding, or not hearing, an attempt at explanation made by the hasty bridegroom. The unpleasant interruption to the festivities of the evening was soon forgotten, and the bridal concluded, as it had begun, in mirth and in good will.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY on a misty morning, in the following month, the herdsman of O'Driscol was seen with his assistants driving home the *calp-an-spre*, or marriage cattle, the only dowry which the bride was in any case expected to bring to her husband. They were followed, at no long interval, by the new-married chieftain and his spouse, attended by the united splendour of either sept. Months rolled away in peace and happiness, as perfect, perhaps, as earth can offer to the most blest of

its inhabitants. It was interrupted before the year had ended by a sudden and a fearful accident.

O'Haedha was seated in front of his dwelling, receiving the tributes of the various holders of his territory in money and in kind. A tiarna, or ruler of a township, handed in his yearly bag of silver bons.* A frank-tenant paid his quarterly sorohen, or soldier tax, in quirreens of butter, and in scrones of oatmeal. One carried on his back a cronnog, or hamper lined with sheepskin, in which was contained the grain of seven score sheaves of wheat, and a woman followed, bearing on her head a meadar, a four-cornered pitcher, hollowed from the trunk of a single sycamore, and containing several gallons of tributary ale, or curmi.

Suddenly the sound of the buabhal, an alarum trumpet of prodigious size, from a neigh-

* Groats.

bowing eminence aroused the chieftain from his tranquil occupation. He looked up, and beheld a horseman galloping towards the Rath, to let him know that hostile spears were seen upon the border, and that the smoke of one or two shielings already arose into the air. Snatching his spear, his shield, and his cathbhar, or helmet, and bidding the people of the Rath not to alarm his wife, the chieftain vaulted on his steed, and galloped away in the direction of the invaders, with such bodies of horse and foot as, summoned by the blast of the buabhal, either joined or overtook him on the way.

Notwithstanding his caution, young Matha heard the din, and came forth upon the ramparts. While she sat, in emotion strongly controlled, awaiting the return of her lord, and listening with a throbbing heart to the distant sounds of conflict, a horseman well accoutred,

but looking pale and anxious, appeared at the entrance of the Rath, and seemed to enquire into the causes of the tumult. Matha started on beholding him.

“Haste, Baseg, haste!” she said, waving her hand with a gesture of eager exhortation. “They are on the borders, and O’Haedha is already in the strife. To the hills, brave Baseg, and assist thy kinsman!”

The thanist, for it was the same of whom we have already spoken, gave the rein to his horse, and was quickly out of sight. Some time passed away, and a daltin came running back to say that the hostile party were a band of the Hooded People of the Hills, the Druid sept over which the chief presided whom Conall had offended at the feast. A second came to say that they were routed. A third, to tell that Baseg and the Chief, out-stripping all their men,

pursued the Druid leader through the Glen of Oaks. There was now a long interval of keen suspense and of anxiety. The next messenger appeared with grief and wild dismay upon his countenance. The chieftain of Rath Aidan had perished. Returning from the pursuit which the fugitives, better skilled in the intricacies of the mountain pass, had rendered fruitless, he had received a blow on the head from the brazen ball of a kran-tabal, or sling which occasioned instant death; and, in a few seconds afterwards, the hostile Ard-Draithe was seen turning at full speed a jutting crag at some distance, and shaking his hand in defiance at the Ithian group who were employed in assisting their fallen leader. The effect of this disastrous stroke, the first that had disturbed their married life, upon the mind of Matha, was as forcible as it was sudden. She was conveyed in a state of unconsciousness

to her apartment, and became in the same day a widow and a mother.

Baseg, the thanist, who had been pursuing the foe in another direction, and was not with his brother when he fell, overtook the mourning group as they bore his lifeless body toward the Rath, upon their wicker shields. The thanist, though brave in action, was not popular in his sept. He was, however, now the eldest chief of the immediate family of his name, and consequently the legal inheritor of the title and power of the perished Conall, even to the exclusion of the new-born heir to his possessions. The sept, however, did not receive his claim without murmuring. They remembered that, impatient of his expectant, and in some degree dependent, condition, Baseg had been detected more than once in the practise of contrivances against his kinsman's life, and it was generally suspected that he did not

regret the chance which removed from his way an obstacle which he could not himself surmount. It was true, that Conall with a national mixture of apathy and affection, not only could not be prevailed on at any time to put justice in force against his kinsman, but did not even turn his experience to advantage by taking the slightest precautions for his own security.

Matha, who had heard nothing of these rumours during the life-time of her husband, was horror-struck when first they reached her ear. Alarmed at the dissensions by which the people were distracted, she proposed, however, with an acuteness which was at once acknowledged, that Baseg should for his former attempts upon his kinsman's life, deliver himself up to the legal justice of his country. If he were acquitted, his claim would be without objection ; if other-

wise, the succession would pass in its lineal course to the infant Elim.

Baseg refused his assent to these conditions, and the sept rejected his demands to be considered as their chief. He complained in bitter terms of the injustice; but, after an ineffectual attempt to enforce his wishes, was obliged to fly the territory, and even lost his own small holding on the lands. To these deep injuries was added, it was said, the recollection of a disappointment of another kind, for Conall, many secretly believed, had been, unknowingly, the successful rival of the thanist in his suit to Matha. To the astonishment of all, the exiled Baseg turned his steps in the direction of the sept of the Ard-Draithe, the reputed slayer of his kinsman, by whom he was received, in their secluded mountain hold, with ready welcome. Resentment it was hardly thought could carry any one so far; and it was

now asserted with confidence that the slayer of the departed chieftain must have acted under the connivance, at least, if not the instigation, of the thanist. The latter, meanwhile, remained amongst his hooded friends, and, by his untiring instances, so far prevailed on their chief (whose native prejudices and love of quarrel were then inflamed by the recent apostacy of a brother), that he undertook the task of re-instating him by force of arms in what he represented as his rightful inheritance. To confirm the mountaineers in his interest, Baseg studied their habits, familiarized himself with their manners, and publicly adopted their belief. The efforts of these new allies, however, were not more successful than his own had been. The Hooded People were discomfited with dreadful loss, and, without serving Baseg, brought infinite calamities on themselves. They were in the end obliged to

purchase peace, by excluding the obnoxious Ithian from their dominions, a step to which they compelled their chieftain to accede. Forsaken by his new allies as well as by his former friends, the miserable Baseg soon after disappeared from the neighbourhood of either sept, after declaring his determination to be avenged of the unjust usurpers of his inheritance, and was at length forgotten on his native soil. The Ard-Draithe, likewise, struck with remorse for the miseries which this unhappy contest had brought upon his people, abated something of his zeal for arms, and gave himself to habits of greater tranquillity. The prudence and firmness of Matha, assisted by the experience of O'Driscoll, succeeded in preserving the fidelity of the sept to her son Elim, and afterwards in maintaining its subordination, and even its warlike character.

Such were the stormy circumstances that preceded and ushered in the birth of the young Ithian chief, the hero of our tale.

CHAPTER IV.

SOON after the re-establishment of peace, a day was appointed for conferring on the infant O'Haedha the name which he afterwards distinguished by his virtues. Matha only waited the return of health to convey the child to Ross Ailithri, near the southern coast, where Fachan, a few centuries before, had founded an academy, ere long to be the centre of a flourishing town.

Before noon on the appointed day, the townsmen were surprized by an unusual spectacle. At

the northern gate appeared a party of *marc-sliadh*, preceding a *carbudh* drawn by a pair of milkwhite hobbies, which were led by two fleet-footed *daltins*, and in which sat Matha dressed in a cloak of crimson bound with a golden fibula upon her bosom, while the infant chieftain rested in her arms. Her hair was no longer tied up, as at her bridal, with azure fillets, and fastened on the crown with a golden bodkin, but hung plaited, in matron fashion, from beneath the snowy folds of a turbaned head-dress. Her sister, Melcha, veiled in the manner of unwedded females, occupied the seat beside her. The venerable O'Driscol and his spouse came after in a second *carbudh*, and the Sior-Lamh brought up the rear on horseback with a body of the well-accoutred hobbeler of Dairinne.*

O'Driscol and his venerable helpmate had

* Carbery.

both declined the office of answering for the young Ithian at the baptismal font. The circle of life, they said, for them was almost closed, nor was it likely they should live to execute the duties to which they would be pledged by such a ceremony. The dignity of sponsors was therefore transferred to the Sior Lamh and to his sister Melcha. Holding the infant in their arms before the marble font, they answered for the child that he would lead a virtuous life, and made themselves responsible for his fidelity to the contract, so far as their exertions could avail. The ceremony ended, young Elim was placed once more in the arms of Matha, and the party prepared to return to Inbhersceine in the same order in which it came.

While Matha prepared to re-ascend the carbudh, a Danaan ceanuighe, or merchant, who had long paid tribute to her father, approached, and

found an opportunity of letting her know that Baseg lingered still among the sea-ports of Dairinne, and that he had been heard to intimate a determination to make some attempt upon the person of the child. Matha, who well knew the ferocious obstinacy of his disposition, laid up the warning in her mind, not doubting that the thanist would be glad to possess himself of so desirable a hostage for enforcing on the sept a compliance with his demands.

On its approach to Rath-Aidan, where it was intended that the occasion should be celebrated by a joyous festival, the cavalcade was encreased to a prodigious extent by the addition of numerous groups of the surrounding families on horse-back and on foot. One of those new comers, as the procession reached the entrance of the valley, was observed to turn aside from the rest, and take the way which led to the lonely inlet of Glen-

gariff. It was Clothra, the wife of a neighbouring Flath, a person in some authority, and holding land under O'Haedha, for which he paid in service and in kind. She rode a small dark mongrel hobbie, which was led by her son Moyel, a fair-faced youth of little more than a dozen years. Directing her course through the crag and woodland of Glengariff, she passed from beneath the branches of a pathway closely embowered into an open space before a building of moderate extent. A lofty screen of ash, oak, hazel, the tree called Indian pine, witch elm, and other tenants of the forest, enclosed the green nearly on all sides, leaving open that alone which commanded a view of the beautiful bay, with the island, at that time garrisoned only by some wandering kine, but from which at present a Martello tower frowns sternly down upon the scene of beauty.

The song of the wood-lark, which, like the cuckoo, warbled on the wing, and the varied strain of the song-thrush, gave additional sweetness to the beautiful retreat, and the view of a fishing currach in the bay, abounding in former times with pilchard, plaice, and gurnet, gave corresponding interest to the sea-ward scene. One circumstance alone appeared not in accordance with the place. It was a row of bare ash-stumps, newly cut, which, as Clothra well remembered, had formed a desirable screen on the water side of the building, and for which its owner had a particular regard.

Before the wooden dwelling, on which the noon-tide sun shone down at present with an oppressive splendour, three figures sat motionless upon the grass, their solemn visages presenting a monumental contrast to the verdure with which they were surrounded. They were the same who

had followed the physician as his daltadhs in the bridal procession, and they now seemed occupied in watching some simples which were drying in the sunshine. Passing these solemn disciples of Esculapius, Clothra advanced to the entrance of the dwelling, and, committing the hobbie to the care of Moyel, made bold to enter with the usual benediction. She found the man of medicine surrounded by the customary paraphernalia of his science, and attired in his dark filleadh, birrede, and ring. His countenance appeared perplexed and indignant, and his eyes were fixed with much interest upon the brehoun, or lawyer, who sat upon a tripod opposite, contemplating with deliberate scrutiny a broad roll of parchment which was displayed before him. In a corner by the ample fire-place sat Meibhe, wife to Fihgnin, brewing some mixtures in a copper cauldron, over a low and flameless fire. She was

useful to her husband not only in his household and in preparing his receipts, but acted in his place amongst the neighbouring families, at those times when Lucina, and not Esculapius, was the power to be invoked. Beckoning Clothra to her side, and bestowing on her the “cead falta,” or “hundred welcomes,” which Fihgnin was too much occupied to give, she let the former understand that the Feath-glic, meaning the learned and skilful, for such was the title which her husband bore in the sept, was sorely annoyed at an accident which had occurred that morning. On walking out to enjoy the fresh morning breeze, which was his custom after rising, he discovered with dismay that a row of his fine ashes had been cut by some youths of the neighbourhood, for the purpose of forming arches to celebrate the christening of their young chieftain. It happened a short time before that the brehoun, Mac Firbis,

arrived at the dwelling, in order to consult the Feath-glic with regard to a constitutional ailment, and the latter was now indemnifying himself for his advice by obtaining that of the brehoun with respect to the trespass which had been committed.

The expounder of the law, having slowly folded up his great manuscript, remained for some time deliberating the matter in his mind, and then laid down the case to his client in a solemn manner, extending one hand and touching it occasionally with the roll of parchment as he spoke, as one beats time to music.

“Learned and dexterous enemy of disease,” said he, “I see not how thou canst be indemnified for this disaster. By the code of Roigne, named Rosgathach, or the learned in song, son of Jughaine the Great, as well as by the Breatha Nimhe, or Celestial Judgments of the Ollamhs,

Forchern, Neid, and Atharni, the only trees protected under the laws of Inisfail are of four classes, or kinds ; the *airigh*, or royal timber, comprizing the oak, the hazel, the holly, the yew, the pine, and the apple ; the *athar* wood, embracing the alder, willow, hawthorn, quickbeam, birch, and the witch-hazel ; the *fogla* wood, comprehending the blackthorn, elder, spindle-tree, white-hazel, and the quivering-aspen ; and, to conclude, the *losa*, or fire wood, including fern, furze, briar, heath, ivy, reeds, and thorn-bush. Under none of which heads do I find mention made of the ash, which seems to have been the sufferer in the case before us."

The man of medicine received this announcement with chagrin. He arose from his seat, and walking toward the open entrance, said in a harsh tone :

" It is not them I blame, nor their dishonest

merriment. It is you," he added, shaking his clenched hand at the three daltadhs who gazed on one another as he spoke, with looks of deeper solemnity than ever ; " Unworthy disciples of an art whose foundation stone is vigilance, is it by negligence like this you hope to rival the celebrity of our great ancestor, who saved the life of king Connor of Uladh, by making the grand discovery that the skull of man may be penetrated without injury to the brain ? Ah, but the monarch's head was more penetrable than yours !"

The brehoun having received his medicine, took his departure, and Clothra unfolded the object of her visit, which was that the Feath-glic might recommend her to Matha as a fosterer to the infant chief, in consideration of which dignity she empowered him to say that she was willing to add a hundred sheep to the flocks that browsed in the valley of Rath-Aidan. Her proposal was

communicated and accepted, less for its liberality than for her gentle character.

In three years after this arrangement had been made, Clothra was seated at evening in the open door of her peillice, which looked upon the bay, when a currach approached the shore, and a stranger, having the appearance of a merchant, landed and approached the dwelling. He greeted Clothra and enquired for Moyel, her husband, who he understood had got some of those beautiful ger-falcons which were indigenous only to Inisfail and *Fuar Lochlon. Clothra, who knew her husband had the birds, arose, and requesting the stranger to look to Elim, who was playing on the ground at her feet, made haste to seek him. Scarcely, however, had she lost sight of the child, when a sudden feeling of distrust awoke in her mind, and she hurried back, accusing herself of

* Norway.

an act of imprudence. She found the stranger already moving toward the shore, with Elim laughing and exulting in his arms. He restored the infant, with an expression of countenance which Clothra could not penetrate ; and, refusing to wait for the completion of his business, pushed quickly off from shore and disappeared. The woman feared to communicate the circumstance to Matha, but from the whole conduct of the stranger, and something inexplicable in his demeanour that seemed to indicate suppressed anxiety, she made no doubt that the whole proceeding was an attempt to obtain possession of the infant. Incapable, however, of preserving so important a matter in her own mind, she mentioned the circumstance to her husband, who was not long in laying it before the widowed mother. Thenceforward Clothra was not permitted to convey the child without the precincts of the Rath.

Almost from his infancy, young Elim gave indications of a generous nature, and of that constancy of temper, the reverse of obstinacy, which, if it be not virtue, is one of its most distinguished qualities. Strong in thought, quick and tender in affection, and cheerful and sweet in manner, his very childhood seemed to the whole sept to give promise of future good government. In the mean time his little frame was not neglected. O'Driscoll Oge, who assisted Matha in her government, took a pleasure in teaching him the ordinary field exercises, while Melcha instructed him at morn and evening in the rudiments of his religious duties. Before he had reached his tenth year, he knew how to rein a hobbie, to drive a carbudh two in hand, to whirl the kran tabal, to dart the javelin, to wield the biail with force and precision, and to use the gen and skiagh with dexterity.

An incident occurred about this period, which, as it affords a glimpse into the character of both mother and son, may be here inserted with advantage to our history.

In the course of acquiring the accomplishments above enumerated, Elim was necessarily much without the circle of his mother's observation. One morning, observing him alone on the platform of the Rath, she went out to enjoy the pleasure of sitting in the shade, and observing his amusements. Elim was too closely occupied to perceive her approaching. He was engaged at the instant in shooting at a leathern target, with one of those small Scythian bows which, in succeeding ages, were found so galling to the harnessed soldiers of Plantagenet. He seemed so much absorbed in his amusement that his mother paused a moment, unwilling to disturb him.

“There’s Conraoi, the Ard-Draithe!” he exclaimed, as he shot an arrow at the target, not supposing that he was overheard. “No; it is in the outer ring, ’tis but a hooded kern. There’s Conraoi!” (as he shot another); “no;—’tis quite a miss.—Ha! there’s a galloglach! And there’s a tioseach in the second ring. Now for the Ard-Draithe! Thou hooded chief, why didst thou murder Conall? Take that! No! no! Farrah! farrah! O’Haedha a-bo! ’Tis in the centre of the field! ’Tis Baseg!”

In the height of his exultation, happening to catch his mother’s eye, he made a sudden pause and lowered his bow with a bashful air.

“Come hither, Elim,” said Matha, beckoning the young archer to her side. “At whom hast thou been shooting?”

“At the Hooded People,” answered Elim.

“And why, my child?”

“ Because Moyel told me that their chieftain killed my father.”

“ And thou fanciedst to thyself, when thou hadst shot thine arrow, that it struck the Ard-Draithe of the Hooded People ? ”

“ No, no ! ” said Elim, “ I aimed at the Ard-Draithe, but I shot the thanist, Baseg. I placed him in the centre, for he deserves it more than Conraoi.”

“ Well, hear me, now, my boy. If thou livest until thou art as old as the senachie,” said Matha, fixing her eye reprovingly, yet affectionately on his, and raising a finger with an air of admonition, “ let me never hear thee utter words like these again. The Hooded People are our friends. My dear boy,” she continued, taking him into her lap, and pressing him tenderly to her bosom, “ I cannot too soon impress it on thee that the Hooded People were not in

truth the slayers of thy father, and the destroyers of all my hopes of earthly happiness. It is the miserable spirit of disunion which exists among the princes of our isle, that has truly wrought our ruin. If thou shouldst live to be a man, my boy, exert thyself to make thy countrymen united, and thou wilt do better than by taking solitary vengeance on the Hooded People."

So saying, she again embraced her child with tenderness, and retired to her apartment. Elim, who was surprised at her emotion, brooded deeply on her words, while he proceeded with his sport in silence. The incident led Matha to consider on the means of procuring her child an education. There was no alternative but that of leaving him ignorant, or parting with him during the period of his instruction. After some keen deliberation with herself, she at length resolved to leave him

at Muingharidh,* a famous abbey on the shores of the Senan,† and the superior of which was a relative of her own, until he should become proficient in the knowledge of his duties, and the learning of the day. The unprotected condition of the sept rendered it impossible for her to be his companion on the way. She determined therefore to commit the precious charge to the guardianship of her brother O'Driscoll, and the escort of a troop of horse. When all was ready, on the eve of his departure, she went herself to announce the resolution to her son. She found him, as before, occupied on the platform in what seemed his favourite amusement. His arrows flew as nimbly as before, but the quarry was of inferior head.

“Now for the osprey!” she heard him say, as he raised the bended weapon to his eye; “is

* Mungret.

† Shannon.

he hit? 'Tis but a puttock! Come, again! Now for him! Ha! 'there goes a heron winged! Again, Farrah! The osprey has it fast."

Smiling at the alteration, Matha summoned the boy into her own apartment, and acquainted him with the projected journey. The grief of Elim was keen, and his feelings amounted to dismay when he was given to understand that his free and sportive sea-side life must be exchanged for the retirement and discipline of a convent. The remainder of the day was spent in taking a long leave of his old friends and favourite amusements. He made Conla, the old filea, sing all his songs, and tired the harpstrings of the crotarie. He visited Clothra at her cottage, and resigned his puny arms to Moyel's keeping. In the morning, arising from a sleepless bed, he was summoned to his mother's room, where he received her parting counsel, and her benediction. She

pressed him to her bosom, kissed, and resigned him to his uncle's care. With a keenness of anguish new to his nature, Elim, escorted by the mounted galloglachs, beheld the fair shores of Inbhersceine, and the still lovelier crag and woodland of Glengariff, fade behind him, until they were shut out from his view by an intervening mountain. Towards noon, however, new sights and scenes began to occupy his mind, and restore his spirits to their usual buoyancy.

CHAPTER V.

THEY travelled for some days through a long tract of country, distinguished by scenery of alternate barrenness and beauty ; spending one night at the castle of a friendly chief, where Elim was received with high distinction ; another in the dwelling of a beatach (one of those houses of free entertainment at that time common throughout Europe) ; and another in a monastery near the road.

About noon on the fourth day of their journey, Elim beheld, for the first time, the broad

and gleaming face of the Senan, the queen of Irish rivers, and the deep and extensive woods which environed the distant seat of letters and religion. The strange prospect of the place, rendered more impressive by the tolling of a bell from the adjoining abbey, cast a new damp on the spirits of the young Ithian, and he alighted at the college gate with a face as serious as if death were the least he expected on his entrance. O'Driscoll conveyed him to the gate of the building. Over the sculptured archway was the figure of a religious having the clerical tunic and bonnet, and holding the crosier and episcopal garments of a prelate lying dead before him. Being the time of study, the court was deserted, except by the hoary porter, and four or five monks, who were walking along to and fro under the shadow of a line of beeches, and reading in silence. Passing this stilly scene, Elim was con-

ducted to the apartment of the abbot. But, before we proceed farther with his history, let us say something of the place which was for many years to be the scene of his education ; and perhaps the reader will forgive us, if, before we penetrate farther into the history of this foundation, we glance for an instant at that of the land in which it rose.

For some centuries before the birth of Elim, its situation was peculiar among the states of Europe. While the coasts of Italy were darkened by the Saracen invasions, while Germany became a waste before the arrows of the Hungarians, and the hoofs of the Lombard horse were trampling on the vineyards of the south, Ireland lay far away amongst the breakers of the Atlantic, an island devoted to the cultivation of religion and the peaceful sciences, the school of Christian letters, and the nursery of Christian virtues. Not many

centuries had passed away since even this distant isle had been itself, as it has since once more become, the scene of fierce and lawless violence. From the remotest period of its colonization, down to that when first the symbol of Christianity appeared upon its shores, it had been the fate of Ireland to nurse within its bosom the seeds of civil strife and enmity. The lonely Hyperborean isle, the theme alike of bardic and historic fiction, its shores, though not unseen, were long untouched by the enquiring navigators of the south. The Phœnician trader beheld its wooded hills from his galley-poop at sea, but the zeal of traffic, his only stimulus, tempted him not so far from his appointed course. A few curious geographers at length descended on the coasts, and time hands down to us the meagre charts of a Ptolemy and a Nennius. The Roman conqueror saw, from the shores of Mona, the mist-like

vision of its mountains ; but the zeal of conquest did no more with him than the zeal of gain with the Phœnician. The isle was left untouched, while a Celtic people wandered in her woods and dwelt in her caverns, without laws and without learning ; simple in their customs, and limited in their desires.

Time rolled away, and the picture changed in figure and in hue. The peaceful Celts departed, and a varied race, driven hither as to a calm retreat by the convulsions of their native countries, brought with them to the isle the lineaments and character of German, Spanish, and of Gallic origin. The fields became more populous, the Brehoun lawgiver sat, scroll in hand, within the earthen walls of his roofless court, and gave judgment on the violated compacts of society. Small villages, with wicker dwellings, and a simple palisade for their defence, were

scattered throughout the plains and vallies. A form of monarchical government, perhaps unique in its kind, united for a time the bonds of social interest throughout the island. The Ard-righ sat in his wooden palace at Tara, and took counsel with the provincial sovereigns of the kingdom for its better government. A form of worship, which seems to have been a compound of the superstition of Zoroaster, and the Scandinavian idolatry, but bloodless in its rites, was established throughout the country. The ploughshare already pierced the bosom of the soil, and the husbandman addressed his devotions to the luminary that prospered his exertions. The keyriaght,* like the Arab, fed his flock from plain to plain; the herds of cattle browsed along the streams, and the music of the harp resounded at evening in the bawn, or under the shadow of a

* Herdsman.

Druid grove. The sound of the great buabhal was heard in the calm sunset from the summit of the lofty round tower, proclaiming the quarters of the moon, and the changes of the seasons, the only marks which science here had yet engraved upon the wheels of time. The spirit of poetry and music visited the islanders, but the demon of war soon also waved his torch amid the woods, and the numbers of voluptuous love were blended with the sounds of pain and violence. The tioseach, seated at night upon his rushen couch, with his three-legged table before him, laid out with a dish of shamrock and a cup of mead, heard, from the poet of his race, the actions of his fathers, and the deeds of his own arm in the battle. The stones of the earth were fashioned into weapons of destruction; the brazen sword-blade shone in the grasp of the galloglach; the sling, the arrow, and the javelin,

made the ways unsafe to the lonely hobbeler, and his barefooted daltin; the island was divided between licentiousness and war; and the steel of Sparta glimmered in the bowers of Cyprus.

CHAPTER VI.

THUS stood the isle, when once again a sudden change reclaimed it. The weapons of the Dal Cassian and the Eoganacht, of the Damaan and the Heremonian, of the Heberian and the Ernain, of the Firbolg, the Irian, and many other septs of the divided colonists, clashed in murderous and untiring conflict from year to year throughout the country. The slightest or the weightiest occasion, a disputed claim to the imperial succession, or a miserable point of etiquette, were sufficient to embroil whole provinces

in war. An unhappy system of inheritance, and ill-adjusted laws of property, together with a thirst of false glory, violent in proportion to the natural fervour of the people, had banished security from all parts of the island, and peace from the minds of the inhabitants. Their monarchs, when not occupied in making their power felt by the princes of their own nation, are said to have employed themselves in foreign wars, in aiding the natives of the adjoining island against the Roman colonists, and even to have carried the weapons of Erin to the foot of the Alps. The event, which brought to pass the important change above alluded to, forms a striking feature in the annals of the isle, and may constitute a fitting prelude to the tale of the young chieftain's education.

The Druids of Meath had received, with funeral honours, on the shores of Coige Laigean,*

* Leinster.

the body of their perished monarch Daithi, who was killed by lightning in the Gallic wars ; and conducted it, accompanied by his nephew Laoghaire, and the returning banners of his army, to the royal sepulchre at Roiligh na Righ. They spoke his praise, they sung his caoine, they buried him with his horse and armour, and Laoghaire was placed in his stead in the throne of Tamrach. He is commemorated as a prince of warlike talents and of civil energy, which, however, appear to have contributed more to his own fame than to the peace or happiness of his neighbours. In order to do honour to the Druids, whose worship he befriended, he attended at the great festival of Bel, at the famous temple of Uisneach in Meath, accompanied by the queen, and the estates of Tamrach. It was the custom, on the eve of this festival, to extinguish all the fires throughout the kingdom, in order that they

might be re-illuminated from one kindled for the purpose by the hand of the Chief Druid.

The sun had already sunk, the pile of fagots was raised before the temple, and the Ard-righ and his royal retinue, surrounded by a multitude of people, silently awaited the moment when the chief Druid was to light up the fire. Before the time, however, had arrived, and while all was yet dark, silent, and expectant, a light was suddenly seen to rise at some distance from the temple. The Druids exclaimed aloud against this profanation of their rites, and demanded of the monarch that the extreme punishment appointed by the laws should be inflicted on this hardy wretch, whoever he might be, by whom the festival of Bel was violated. The monarch gave orders that the transgressor should be brought before him, and his messengers returned, bringing with them Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland.

The great missionary defended the act of which he was accused, by announcing to the assembly the truths of Christianity. A long and laborious life was afterwards spent in completing that alteration in the national worship of which this was almost the commencing stroke. The peaceful revolution was effected without meeting any opposition, save that of the ineffectual disputation of the Druids, and it spread with fervour and rapidity. Princes gave up their lands and dwellings to the service of religion and of charity. Kings frequently resigned the asion of empire, and took the monastic habit within the walls of Ardmacha, or of Huy ; churches and seminaries sprung up in every district, monasteries were endowed and crowded with religious to an extent that seems hardly credible, even on all the concurrent testimonies of the day. So great was the zeal of religion, that a modern historian com-

plains of the negligence evinced by the national annalists, for a long time after, in affairs of military interest, and charges them with paying more attention to the building of a church than to the fighting of a battle. There was scarce a district without its religious foundations ; scarce an islet, or lone retreat throughout the country that did not harbour some religious penitent ; or a desert rock that had not been at some time sanctified by the spirit of devotion and of self-denial.

Unlike many of the religious foundations of that period, which were constructed, after the national manner, of wood, the college of Muingharidh was a damliag, or stone building, and its grouted fragments, diffused at this day over an extensive tract of ground, demonstrate the masonic skill of its founders. The religious, who were of the order of Saint Munchen, the founder of the abbey, and of prodigious number, had, as

is usual in such establishments, their various duties appointed to them. Some devoted themselves wholly to a life of contemplation, and of manual labour. Others employed themselves in the care of the sick, the entertaining of strangers, the giving of alms, and the instruction of the numerous youth who flocked hitherward in great numbers from different parts of the island, from the shores of Inismore, and even from those of some continental nations. Those who were skilled in psalmody succeeded each other in the choir, which, night and day, for many a century, sent forth its never ceasing harmony of praise ; while far the greater number were employed in cultivating, with their own hands, the extensive tracts of ground which lay around the convent, and the neighbouring city. Morn after morn, regular as the dawn itself, the tolling of the convent bell, over the spreading woods which then

enriched the neighbourhood, awoke the tenants of the termon-lands, warning them that its cloistered inhabitants had commenced their daily rule, and reminding them also of that eternal destiny which was seldom absent from the minds of the former. The religious, answering to the summons, resumed their customary round of duties. Some aided the almoner in receiving the applications of the poor, and attending to their wants. Some assisted the chamberlain in refitting the deserted dormitory. Some were appointed to help the infirmarian in the hospital. Some aided the pittance and cellarer in preparing the daily refection, as well for the numerous members of the confraternity, as for the visitors, for whose accommodation a separate refectory was furnished; and after the solemn rite of the morning, at which all assisted, had been concluded, the great body of the monks departed to

their daily labour on the adjoining tillage and pasture lands.

Sometimes, at this early hour, the more infirm and aged, as well as the more pious, of the neighbouring peasantry, were seen thridding their way along the woodland paths, to mingle in the morning devotions of the religious. The peasant, as he trotted by on his karr, laden with the produce of the season, paused for an instant to hear the matin hymn, and added a prayer that heaven might sanctify his toil. The fisherman, whose currach glided rapidly along the broad surface of the river, rested on his oars at the same solemn strain, and resumed his labour with a more measured stroke and a less eager spirit. The son of war and rapine, who galloped by the place, returning with sated passions from some nocturnal havoc, reined up his hobbie at the peaceful sounds, and yielded his mind unconsciously to an

interval of mercy and remorse. The oppressive chieftain and his noisy retinue, not yet recovered from the dissipation of some country coshering,* hushed for a time their unseemly mirth as they passed the holy dwelling, and yielded in reverence the debt which they could not pay in sympathy. To many an ear the sounds of the orison arrived, and to none without a wholesome and awakening influence.

Not far remote, amid the trees, arose the wooden dwelling of the Comorban, a kind of lay prior, who divided with the Erenach the care of the termon lands, the duties of hospitality to strangers, of preserving the fabric of the college and protecting its revenues. These two orders, which were peculiar to ancient Ireland, by relieving the professed religious of all merely temporal cares, left them at liberty for the undivided pur-

* Feast.

suit of their more essential duties. Besides the Master Regent, the college had its readers and prælectors ; and the liberality of those princes of Leath Mogha, by whom it had been originally endowed, enabled the religious, in addition to their other offices of charity, to supply the students gratuitously, not only with food and raiment, but with lodging and books for their instruction, a precious article in those times, when profane literature, long exanimate in Europe, was beginning to struggle into life.

The small city of Deochain Assain, which, like the modern Gottingen, was intended chiefly for the accommodation of the numerous students at the adjoining seminary, had already begun to raise its wooden peillices and low-eaved roofs between that building and the river side. Here, through the dreary winter months, the rushlights gleamed from the studious windows of the well-

born natives and strangers, as well as of their poorer condisciples, whom either the national love of letters, or a desire of participating in the state privileges attached to the literary character, had tempted to avail themselves of the gratuitous instruction of the religious. At long intervals appeared the shop of some Danaan dealer in forest skins, or vender of dyed stuffs, while the ringing anvil of some Fearbolgan artificer in iron work mingled its sound with the eternal choir of the distant abbey. By night, and with the light of rush torches, the religious gave their instructions in the college. By day, the greater portion of the body was sent abroad, to pursue their customary toil, till night recalled them to this hive of holiness and industry. In the summer months their literary tasks were laid aside for more secluded exercises, and the students were dispersed, the wealthy to their own

friends, while the strangers and the poor were maintained by the college, amply supported for the purpose by its original endowments, as well as by the labour of the monks.

Bounding in the western prospect from the college gate, and overlooking with its rugged brows the spreading sheet of silver which the Senan rolled along its base, appeared the Candle Rock, as yet uncrowned by its forbidding battlements, and only graced by the distant clustering foliage. On tranquil days, the convent toll was answered from the churches in Luimneach na Luingas,* the City of Ships, which reared its water-girt walls above the parted flood at the distance of a few miles up the river. Southward appeared the uneven summit of Knoctierna, and on the east arose the rounded heights which divided this principality from that of Shior Mu-

* Limerick.

imhean, the possession of the children of Cian. On the further side of the river, softened in the haze of distance, the eye rested on the wooded hills and cultured vales of Claire, where the wreathing smoke arose in various places, from some concealed Heberian brugh, or rustic village.

Scattered through the woods by which the college and city were surrounded, appeared many a secluded peillice, or skin-thatched cottage of wood, the dwelling of some humble tiller of the termon lands, whose healthy figure and mantle of decent frieze, unlike the lean and beaten aspect of those who dwelt upon the secular townships, proclaimed him the dependent of no harsh and griping landlord. The simple life of the religious limited their wants to a circle easily filled, and their extensive possessions vested in them for the common good, left ample means of charity at their disposal. Nor was the exercise of public

hospitality, in those days, when places of hired refreshment were unknown, confined to the religious orders. On a crossway, which, at the distance of a few miles, divided the great road leading to the antique city of Athdair, appeared the open dwelling of the Brughnibh, or Beatach, which, as it had been endowed before the college, for that purpose, by the civil authorities, now shared with that establishment the honour of affording rest and refection to the pilgrim and the stranger.

Thus, whatever tumults agitated the quiet of surrounding townships, benevolence and peace reigned always undisturbed in those districts dedicated to religious seclusion; and few instances occur, through all the troubled course of Irish history, in which these sanctified retreats were profaned by civil violence,—a circumstance so unusual amongst contemporary nations. The causes already assigned had banished peace and security

from all parts of the island, except those which were devoted by common consent to the service of religion and of learning ; but it was enough to bear this character to ensure respect and forbearance, even from the most licentious. Few, indeed, were the instances of mercy and of quiet to those who tilled the soil of secular proprietors. In their holdings, the ravaged corn field and the driven herd made famine a frequent, and poverty a constant guest, nor did violence leave to industry any other mode of compensation than the fatal instruction which she gave, and which was too often bettered in the learning. But the voice of war sounded not in the convent shades ; the houses of the Brughnibh and the Erenach were always open, and none envied the calm which all were invited to partake.

Such was the college of Muingharidh, such was the land in which it stood, and the train of

events from which it derived its origin. Such was the scenery by which it was surrounded, and such the character of its possessors, of its dependents, and of its neighbours. If worldly pleasure were excluded from its precincts, its share of happiness was yet not small. The even and recollected cheerfulness, which illumined the manners of the religious, gave a brightness to their austerity, and made virtue attractive in the eyes of their disciples. The voice of authority, though not forgotten, was rarely exercised ; and love removed its sharpness from restraint, and its weariness from duty.

CHAPTER VII.

HAVING passed the extensive court of the building, the Sior Lamh and his bewildered nephew arrived at the door which opened to that part of the building occupied by the superior and the principal officers of the confraternity. A porter showed them to an apartment plainly furnished, in which Elim saw an old man dressed in a white cassock, with a black cloak and hood thrown back on his shoulders. His head was bald; but a long white beard descended in waves of silver on his breast. O'Driscoll, whom he recognized

with the air of a relative, having declared the principal object of his journey, the old man beckoned Elim to his side, and pressed the little trembling hand within his own, using at the same time some cheering expressions to remove the sense of overpowering awe with which the youthful Ithian was oppressed.

“Young as thou art,” said he, “thou hast the steady eye of an O’Haedha. Thou dost not know me, Elim. I am an Ithian, too. Take courage, child; we are not going to make a monk of thee.”

Elim smiled, but still cast awful looks around him, and seemed as if he had his own opinion upon these assurances. In consideration of his rank, it was decided that he should not be sent, like the generality of the students, to occupy lodgings in the adjoining town, but remain for the present in the apartments of the precentor,

the person who had the chief direction of the choir service.

“The precentor,” said the abbot, “is a favourite with the students ; thou wilt like him much for a companion, Elim.”

The Sior Lamh, to his nephew’s great delight, remained for the night at the abbey, and Elim was permitted to occupy the same apartment. At midnight, hearing a bell toll, and supposing it was the signal for rising, he got up and put on his little truis and cota. Opening the door of the apartment without waking his uncle, and passing into a long hall which led to the cells of the religious, he met one of the confraternity leaving his apartment, with a rosary and a burning taper of twisted rushes in his hand.

“Thou art early up, my little friend,” he said, “what makes thee restless ?”

“I heard the bell,” said Elim, in a timid tone, “and I thought it was for waking.”

“Thou mayest go back to thy couch,” said the religious, smiling. “We are not going to put thee to so severe a discipline. It is only the monks who rise at midnight.”

At day break, the precentor came to awaken him. The abbot had truly said, that Elim would find pleasure in his company. He was a man of middle age, the son of a neighbouring Dal Cassion chief, who had at an early period devoted himself to religion, and displayed an extraordinary genius for music and poetry. He spent the greater part of the day in showing Elim over the foundation and through the neighbourhood, and in discoursing cheerfully of their mode of life, the country and employments of the students, and the nature of their studies. Passing along a winding path which led from the abbey through

an extensive thicket, a scene of singular novelty and animation burst upon the eyes of the young Ithian. They passed from beneath the boughs of the closely-woven oak and alder trees, and suddenly entered on a wide tract of highly cultivated land, of more than half a mile in extent, and bounded by a well-built wall, on which above a thousand monks, in their conventual attire, were busy in the work of harvest. Some reaped and bound the corn, some piled it into stooks, and some conveyed it home on karrs. Some plied the scythe, the rake, and the fork, on the adjoining meadow lands, while others formed the hay already saved into stacks and ricks. Here rose a barn, in which resounded the strokes of a hundred flails ; while a corresponding number of religious labourers, winnowed the grain abroad in the light autumn wind. The noise of grating quern-stones sounded from a building on their

left, through the open doors of which Elim perceived a number of monks at work in sifting and preparing the flour. Far away on the right appeared a gently undulating plain, dotted with tufts of ash and birch trees, on which fed numerous herds and flocks, under the superintendence of religious shepherds and religious herdsmen. A calm autumnal sunshine rested on the extensive scene of labour, and the effect of what he saw, combined with the view of the river and its numerous shipping; together with the murmur of the town and of the distant city; appeared to Elim to constitute the most beautiful and animating sight he had ever witnessed in his life.

The precentor next conducted him through the town of Deochain Assain. It was at present somewhat deserted, for no public instructions were given in the convent during the months of summer and autumn. At their return to the

abbey, as Elin passed the court-yard, he saw about a dozen youths at play, who were, as the precentor told him, the only pupils at present in the college, being the sons of distant chieftains and Airighs. They got into groups as Elin came in sight, and, by their smiling and gazing, showed that he was the subject of their conversation.

On the following morning, Elin was introduced to his classfellows, and before the opening of the winter season, when the town and college were crowded with multitudes of students, had already made a considerable progress in the course of education which the times afforded. It was severe, for in those days learning itself was esteemed a matter of secondary importance to the habits of self-constraint and vigorous application which were acquired in its pursuit. Elin, however, did not shrink from labour. He

studied with diligence, obeyed with alacrity, and observed the convent rule with a devout exactness. A love of practical science, a temper at the same time firm and docile, an open simplicity of mind, an unpresuming courage, and generosity of spirit, rendered him dear to his instructors and his schoolfellows. There are few communities, perhaps, in which some bright characters are not found, unconsciously possessing the love and admiration of the whole; and it might be said of Elim, to tell his character in one sentence, that, without knowing it himself, he was the general favourite of the college of Muingharidh.

On the day before the opening of the public lecture-room, which occurred soon after the festival of Michaelmas, the young chieftain and the precentor entered the room in which preparations had been already made for the commencing season. The chair of the lecturer was decorated

with the last boughs of autumn, and benches were placed for the accommodation of some thousands of scholars. As the lectures were always given at night, a number of torch-stands encircled the vast apartment, in each of which was placed a flambeau, composed of twisted rushes, dipped in oil. Neither for these preparations, nor for any other art of manufacture or of husbandry, had the community occasion to go beyond the precincts of their own domain; their custom being to alternate the labour of the mind with the exertion of the frame, in all the departments of science and of art.

One of the choristers was employed in stringing a cuit of a new invention; and Elim urged him to put it to the proof, by accompanying his own rich voice in some little melody. He readily complied, and made the extensive building re-echo to the following words,

of what happened to be a favourite song of Elim's :

I.

Like the oak by the fountain,
In sunshine and storm ;
Like the rock on the mountain,
Unchanging in form ;
Like the course of the river,
Through ages the same ;
Like the mist, mounting ever
To heaven, whence it came.

II.

So firm be thy merit,
So changeless thy soul,
So constant thy spirit,
While seasons shall roll ;
The fancy that ranges
Ends where it began,
But the mind that ne'er changes
Brings glory to man.

Scarce was the song concluded, when one of the young students came running at full speed into the lecture-room, and exclaiming :

“ Elim ! Elim ! there is a new scholar from Inismore ! ”*

* Great Britain.

Perceiving the precentor, he made a sudden pause, and lowered his head. Elim smiled, and went with him to the yard, where he beheld two figures that struck him forcibly by their features and their strange attire. The first was an old man, thin, and sharp-visaged, with a sternness in the eye and brow that amounted to harshness. He wore a cap like the ancient Phrygian bonnet, the Anglo-Saxon tunic and girdle, in which was stuck a knife called a handsec, and on his feet the blackened buskin and striped stocking of his country. But the second figure attracted most of Elim's observation. It was that of a boy, about his own age, but slightly formed, and with a piercing and somewhat sullen expression of countenance. His attire was gay, even to frivolousness. His head was bare, but the hair around his crown was so curiously plaited as to resemble a close cap; his tunic, of the

finest linen, open on the bosom and adorned with a border, and his girdle highly ornamented. A similar taste pervaded the rest of his attire, and he gazed on the group of boyish scholars that gathered together to whisper and look at the new comer, with a glance that was at the same time proud and shy. At the moment when Elim arrived, the old man was in the act of resigning him into the hands of the master regent, and preparing to depart:

“I give him to thee,” said he, “to make of him what I could not, a scholar. Kenric, farewell!” he shook his hand; “*Here* thou must apply; here thou wilt be compelled to know that perseverance is the road of learning. There will be no Domnona here to screen thee.”

He departed, and the young Anglo-Saxon gazed after him, with features of dismay and grief. The master regent took his hand.

“Take courage, Kenric,” he said, “thou wilt not find us so severe as thine uncle thinks.”

He led the new pupil into the abbey, and the students went to their play. Before we mention in what way the Anglo-Saxon was disposed of, it is necessary to relate the story of his childhood and extraction.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the kingdom of the Northumbers, and not far from the banks of the Ouse, stood the castle of the duke Elfwin, a descendant of one of those old heratoches by whom this portion of the Heph-tarchy was governed, ere Ida formed it into a single kingdom. The castle, in order that its oaken walls might be protected from the violent winds, was situate, after the fashion of the time, in a valley, or dene, called the Dene of Ouse. The building, both for beauty and extent, was the wonder of the surrounding neighbourhood. It

was framed throughout of hedge oak of the hardest grain, and stood in the centre of a princely frank chase, or unenclosed domain, comprehending many miles of park and forest. The chase was one of the finest in the seven kingdoms. The extensive wald, or woodland, abounded in foxes, boars, and wolves for the chase; the park, in coneys, as fat as those of Meal or Disnege, in hares, in martins, and in red and fallow deer, of every quality, from the fawn to the buck, and from the calf to the hart. The river, and a small lake that skirted the wald, were frequented by store of birds. The crane, the bittern, the heron, and the duck, either stalked along the shore, or dived among the reeds, while the pewit wheeled overhead, and the wild swan built her nest amid the sedge, or breasted the wavelets of the lake.

The Dene was allotted to sundry tenants, to

be held, as was the Saxon custom, by copy of court roll; and these rolls were committed by mutual consent to the keeping of Ailred, a distant relative of the duke, and a thriving citizen of the adjoining town. It was a beautiful vale, chiefly laid out in pasturage; the uplands stocked with herds of kine and fine-fleeced sheep, while the bottoms, near the river, derived such fertility from the occasional overflowings of the Ouse, that, as Ailred often boasted, if a rod were laid on the field overnight, it would be hidden by the grass at morning. The town, which stood near the borders of the river, consisted of about six or seven score of wooden houses, not framed of oak, like that of duke Elfwin, but slenderly put together of sallow, plumb-tree, hard-beam, or elm, and in some instances of wicker, plastered with clay. The inhabitants were principally the husbandmen and shepherds of the Dene (who, like

the vintagers of Spain, combined the characters of rustic and of citizen), besides a few artizans, a clergyman, and a schoolmaster.

Adjoining the town was a bridge, crossing the Ouse, and leading to an extensive common, where a multitude of poor dependents on the bounty of the great proprietor maintained their little holdings free of charge. On the centre of the bridge was an inscription, in the Saxon dialect, which, with little alteration, might run thus :

“ I am free march, as passengers may ken,
To Scots, to Britons, and to Englishmen.”

The remoteness of the place protected it, in a great degree, from suffering in the frequent agitations which disturbed the kingdoms of the Heptarchy; and the character of the duke himself, who was of a tranquil and studious turn of mind, promoted, in a high degree, the prosperity of his dependents.

The largest, and most commodious, of the dwellings in the town was that of Ailred, already mentioned, who rented a large portion of the Dene; and, on the score of his relationship to the duke, possessed a considerable portion of his patronage. The house contained, not only the necessary apartments for human inmates, but also comprehended, under the same low roof, a dairy, stable, and all other offices. The principal apartments were impanelled with clay of various colours, white, red, and blue, and Ailred, though now compelled to admit the light through panels of horn, did not despair of seeing the time arrive when the sun should shine upon his humble floor, as on that of his ducal relative, through a lattice glazed with chrystal, or perhaps with panes of beryl. He had much increased his wealth by his marriage with Domnona, the daughter of one of those wandering graziers, who, from the

earliest times (like the Irish Keyriaght), fed their flocks and herds in companies, from place to place. This patriarchal mode of life was now, however, almost extinct, and confined to the remotest districts. On the occasion of their marriage, the display of wealth on both sides was such as formed the wonder of the Dene, more especially as Ailred was known to be a man of harsh manners, and more addicted to the pursuit, than the parade, of riches. His dress on this occasion shone with ornaments of coral, Berwick jet, the erne stone, and other native gems; nor did that of Domnona fall behind him in magnificence. To her charge was committed the care of the dairy, the principal produce of which consisted of hinds' milk and cheese, while Ailred continued his superintendence of the tillage and pasture lands, and his indefatigable attention to the wishes of his patron.

Returning one morning from the castle of the duke, in less than a year after his marriage, Ailred was met in the main street of the little town by a female neighbour, wrapped in the discreet attire of the Anglo-Saxon matrons. As she encountered Ailred, she put aside the kerchief from before her face, and said :

“Son of Aldeswold, I give thee joy.”

“What! Is Domnona well?” returned the husband.

“Home with thee,” said the matron, “and thou shalt see a sight to make thee a happy man.”

As he proceeded, Ailred was met by Oswy, the goose-herd, sent officially to announce what had been intimated to him by his female neighbour. Before he had reached his door, he found that the whole town were aware of his good hap ; and a number of interested neighbours were

approaching and departing from his threshold, some making, and some satisfying enquiries. The outer room was crowded with kerchiefed matrons, and with the smiling faces of substantial citizens. All gave place with a buzz of congratulation when Ailred made his way through the midst, and it was his severe and learned, but fortuneless brother, Vuscfraëa that placed in his arms the dearest burthen parent ever bore, his first born child, a fair and healthy boy.

To please the duke, whose wife and only child had died some years before, the son of Ailred received the name of Kenric, which was that of his patron's child. By the mother's side, he claimed some connexion with the island of Inisfail, where he was now sent to receive his education. Native historians tell us that, as early as the reign of Heremon (the founder of one of the great rival dynasties of ancient Ireland), a body of

Picts landed in the harbour of Inbher Slainge (the present Wexford), and were successfully employed by Criomthan, the Fearbolg, then governor of Coige Laighean, against the Danaan exiles who were accustomed to annoy the coasts from the opposite shores of Britain. In consequence of this service, they sought from Heremon a permanent settlement in the country, but the wary Ardrigh, suspecting that such useful friends might prove as formidable enemies, instead of complying with their request, procured them possessions on the shores of Inismore, with an agreement that, in all future intermarriages, the children of Irishwomen should inherit without regard to primogeniture. And, from this half Hibernian race, was descended the wife of Ailred, the Anglo-Saxon, and the mother of Kenric.

Kenric inherited from his mother that fairness

of complexion, and delicacy of form, which attracted the admiration of Gregory the Great in the slave-mart at Rome ; but what was beauty in Domnona was weakness and effeminacy in her son. As years rolled on, it became evident that the mind of the young Northumbrian was not free from the soft and feminine turn which disfigured his person ; and, unfortunately, his early habits of life, combined with the temper of his superiors, tended to confirm this fatal defect both in the one and in the other. His mind, as is generally the case with such natures, was sharp and suspicious, and his feelings keen and sensitive, and not a little selfish, whenever it was necessary to accompany the effort of generosity with one of self-denial.

These seeds of unhappiness were counterbalanced by an imagination ardent, active and capacious, and such as, if supplied with proper

food, and properly directed, might have led to the formation of an useful and a thinking character. As it was, he was left to such material as chance, or the impulse of his own objectless curiosity, brought in his way. Domnona was incapable of instructing him ; Ailred despised learning ; and Kenric was yet too young to join his father in his agricultural pursuits, and too delicate, as Domnona believed, for the stern discipline of Vuscfraea's school. In consequence of these difficulties, he was left to dispose of his idle time according to his pleasure. Sometimes, he stole off at school hours to his uncle's house, where, seated by the *reredosse* in the hall (for the luxury of a chimney was in these days unknown), he listened to the tales of Webba, Vuscfraea's only servant. Holding the fair-faced boy between his knees, he would relate, in a low, drowsy, tone, long legends of British chivalry and romance ; of the

giant Albion ; of the wars of Brute, and the fall of Gogmagog at Dover ; of the unhappy Lear and his ungrateful daughters ; and other narratives, such as to Webba seemed but toys and pastime, but which, combined with his habits of mental indolence, were full of future injury to the sensitive and fanciful mind of his young hearer. In this position he would stay, gazing on the wood embers, and listening to Webba, until the shouting and running of children by the door announced the termination of the school hour, and the speedy approach of his rigid uncle. At these dreaded sounds he would hie through the back-door, across the adjoining gardens, which lay behind the town, and arrive at his father's house in time for the afternoon meal. Sometimes, when Webba could not afford time for his amusement, he would accompany Oswy, the little goose-herd, into the fields, and retail for

his instruction the histories which he had already stored up, in a memory remarkably tenacious of fictitious incident, and graced with all the exuberance of his own insatiable fancy. Sometimes, when the geese, manifesting an unusual degree of insubordination, demanded the exclusive attention of his auditor, he would sit in the sunshine, near the wald, watching the squirrels in the boughs, or listening for hours to the sound of the wind in the trees, or the rushing of the wandering Ouse. Sometimes he would spend good part of a moonlight night at the window of his sleeping-room, to hear the melancholy song of the nightingale in the thickets of the silent Dene; and at noon he would often lie stretched at length upon the river bank, watching his own airy fancies as they rose and faded, like one on the sea shore, contemplating the irises that arise from the billows as they fall and break in mist and foam upon the strand.

This life of idleness and of romantic luxury laid the foundation of another great deficiency in the character of Kenric. It produced the same effect that satiety of enjoyment is said to do in the licentious ; it gave him fitful and unsettled habits, and added, to his natural weakness of resolve, a perpetual incertitude and irresolution of mind, and an incessant change of purpose ; this was not heeded by his guardians, because it was only apparent in his amusements, and his pursuits were too frivolous in their eyes to allow the evil at any time to be attended with important consequences. Sometimes Domnona, while busy at her dairy, heard Kenric's voice in the yard, summoning the dogs of the house, limmers, harriers, band-dogs, and all, to look for badgers in the sandy ground and amongst the brush wood ; and, in half an hour after, going out to visit Vusefræa, she would find him seated by

the reredosse, leaning on Webba's lap, and listening to the story of Locrine.

Nor were the parents of Kenric the persons best calculated, either by precept or example, to rectify these defects in their son. It is true the manners of the Anglo-Saxons were pure and simple, for they had not yet been tainted by the influence of those habits of living and feeling which were afterwards introduced by their northern conquerors; and the mind of Kenric unfolded itself in the midst of a modest and pious community. But Ailred and Domnona were not, in the opinion of their neighbours, the most exemplary beings in the Dene of Ouse. Domnona was fond of her child, afraid of her husband, and a little vain of herself. She was not one of those muffled specimens of Anglo-Saxon womanhood, whom the industrious Strutt commends with a patriotic delight for their becoming

closeness of attire. The good advice which they were accustomed to hear, week after week, from the lips of the successors of Aidan, did not hinder the wife of Ailred from using curling irons, painting her face with stibium, and figuring at the assemblies of the place in a golden head-band and vermiculated necklace, all which were practices confessedly beyond the Anglo-Saxon notions of moderation in apparel. In the mean time Ailred, when not employed for the advantage or the pleasure of his patron, was apt to steal out privately, to enjoy his nightly draught of ale, and game of *tœfl*, at one of the prohibited places of entertainment in the town.

Between them both, young Kenric profited little. If Ailred at any time took notice of his child, it was only to teach him by what signs he should discover to a nicety how much a fat ox might bring to the butcher in retail, or

to place him on his knee and sing the old couplet :

“ When the sand doth serve the clay,
Then we may sing, Well away !
But when the clay doth serve the sand,
Then it is merry with England.”

Domnona, on the other hand, when at leisure, taught him how to hang his little sagum with the courtliest air, and to dispose the *beah*, on festal occasions, with the best effect.

To end this life of idleness, rather than from any faith in the utility of letters, Ailred at length consented to have Kenric placed at the school of his morose and rigid uncle, and Domnona, who began to be ashamed of Kenric's ignorance, accorded a slow consent. Early at morn when their first meal was ended, and Ailred had departed to the Dene, Domnona, wrapping her slight figure in a loose walking dress, and taking

the reluctant Kenric by the hand, left home with a heavy heart for the dwelling of Vusfræa.

The building stood near the bridge already mentioned. As Domnona, holding the delicate Kenric at her side, glided by the open street doors, returning the frequent greetings of the inmates, and almost fearful of committing her fragile toy to hands so harsh as his uncle's, she was met by Alfrida, the same matron who had announced the birth of Kenric to his father. The worthy housewife was, in like manner, accompanied by her son, a round-faced boy. The following conversation passed between the neighbours at their meeting:

“ Good day, good neighbour.”

“ Give ye good day, Alfrida.”

“ So Ailred sold the kine ? ”

“ Aye, hath he ; they are on the Gwethelin*
for Cair Lud.”†

“ And for how much ? ”

“ Five rings a piece the oxen, and three for
the heighfers.”

“ Ailred’s a thriving man. The year has
fallen out ill with Eanfrid. The wild bulls in
the Wald have gored the kine, and the wolves
been at the sheep, and the drought has left the
Ouse low, and the bottoms bare. Why were ye
not at the dance the other even ? Yet it was
poor in mirth, for thou knowest that Oswald ever
was a niggard. I had my rings of jet, and a new
white coral cross. Is this thy boy ? He grows.
Dost know me, Kenric ? ”

Kenric held down his head, ashamed ; to
Domnona’s mortification, and the amusement of
Alfrida.

* A highway.

† London.

“He does not thrive so well as thine, Alfrida. How dost, my fair-faced Eldred?”

“How dost, Domnona?” said the boy, unabashed.

“Aye,” said Alfrida, “thanks to Vuscfæa and Vuscfæa’s rod, the child has manners and a spice of Latin. Canst tell,” she said, addressing Kenric, “the division of the year?”

Kenric was mute.

“What sayest thou, Eldred?”

Eldred cast an eye of conscious superiority on Kenric, and turning up the side of his broad moon-face, repeated in a loud singing tone the well known words :

“Junius, Aprilis, Septemque, Novemque tricenos,

“Unum plus relique, Februs tenet octo vicanos,

“At si bissextus fuerit superadditur unus.”

“He is a wondrous boy,” said Domnona, in a mournful tone.

“Aye, he has got a memory. But I must hasten home. Good day, Domnona.”

“Give ye good day, Alfrida.”

They passed each other, on their several errands. The resolution of Domnona, which had been shaken by the mention of the rod, received a further shock when she approached the school-house, and heard, within, the murmur of the small community, and the iron tones of Vuscfræa at intervals, commanding silence, or calling up a class. The recollection, however, of the shining superiority of Alfrida's boy overcame her maternal fears, and she entered the dwelling.

CHAPTER IX.

SHE found Vuscfæa in the little school-room, through which, the instant she appeared, a sudden hush prevailed. All eyes were turned on the new comer with the curiosity manifested by the inmates of an aviary at the entrance of a new captive. While Kenric hardly dared to look around, or raise his eyes to the hardly chiselled visage of the unimaginative Vuscfæa, Domnona, in a gentle voice, made known her husband's wishes to his brother, and formally committed Kenric to his care. Vuscfæa heard her with

satisfaction, and appointed his nephew a solitary tripod, at a little distance from his own chair. As she was about to depart, Domnona, slightly confused, bade Vuscfræa follow her into the passage leading to the street, and said :

“Thou must deal gently with my boy, Vuscfræa. His poor thin frame could never bear hard usage. He had a fever-fit with his last teeth, and his little strength has never since returned. Besides, his disposition is so gentle, that a word to him is more than the rod to another boy.”

Vuscfræa heard her with a stern brow, his eyes fixed hard upon the ground, and one ear slightly turned towards Donnona, as if to give her a fair hearing. When she had ended, he replied, in a tone that made her tremble :

“I will make thy boy a scholar ; I have no pets, no favourites, no darlings. There is no

Cyprus, woman, on my map. Vuscfræa makes not sybarites, but men."

"Thou knowest best," said Domnona, in a deprecating tone.

"Let Ailred keep his boy," continued the monarch of the pigmies, "if I am to be thwarted in my discipline. If fondling and dandling be the education he desires for him, let him keep his boy at home. Let him keep him to feed kine, and fatten on the produce of the Dene, but leave letters to those who know how to endure and labour. Take off thy boy, take him off!"

"I pray thee," said Domnona, "say no more. Thou knowest best. I hope thou wilt not let Ailred know aught of this folly, Vuscfræa. It was entirely my own motion."

So saying, and recommending her boy to the care of Providence, she left the house, while

Vuscfraea compressed his lips, and, pausing for a time, repeated in a severe tone :

“Thy motion ! And I might have judged it so. Ye are proper guides for youth. Ye must have feasts and revels, jet from the hills, and coral from the coasts, your erne stones, muscle pearls, and chains of gold, your comforters and fisting hounds to carry in your bosoms. Nay, nay, Vuscfraea’s rod shall not bud and blossom for lack of use, I promise thee. Thy motion, sayest thou ? I’ll make that motion vain.”

Notwithstanding this stern resolve, Vuscfraea spared to Kenric the dernier punishment in such communities, but unfortunately made up in severity of manner what was omitted in corporeal discipline, and visited on his feelings the infliction which he spared his frame. All who have undergone that fearful ordeal, the first day at school, may imagine something of Kenric’s

feelings after the departure of Domnona, and during the whole lonesome afternoon. Few of his schoolfellows were of more than his own age, for Vuscfraëa only professed to prepare his pupils for the more expensive seminaries of Cair Grant or Inisfail. They were for the greater part of the day busy in humming over their tasks, so that an occasional glance, or whispered jest, was all the notice that the new scholar received throughout the day; and he sat in contemplative silence, the loneliest spectacle in all the Dene. Towards evening, when Vuscfraëa went to order some household business, those who had ended their literary toil, began to acknowledge their new companion in the usual manner, by gathering around his chair, and asking him sundry witty questions, such as—"what kind of a man was his grandame?" "how many feathers in a band-dog's tail?" "what would he give a yard for

the noise of a wheelbarrow?" &c. At length, growing more familiar, some took the liberty of pulling his hair, some tapped him on the head, some twitched him by the nose, and by divers sleights and jests so lowered him in his own esteem, that he looked upon them all as beings of a superior order. One boy, in particular, something above his own size, excited general amusement by taking Kenric under the arm, as if for the purpose of protection; but, while in a voice of ironical sternness, he commanded the others to forbear, he adroitly inflicted, under the mask of friendship, some severe corporeal chastisement behind; an insult of which Kenric, for prudential reasons, did not take any notice.

Kenric's softness of disposition rendered him, for an unusual length of time, a subject for such intellectual sport as the above, and this, combined with the rigid manner of Vuscfraea, made

school no place of pleasure. His only consolation through the day was looking forward to the hour of breaking up, and his sunny stroll by the river-side, or through the shady wald, with such of his schoolfellows as by a little assistance at their tasks, or by other means, he was able to bring into his interest. But the pleasantest hours which he passed, while at his uncle's school, were those which he spent at evening, near the little bridge which spanned their native river, in listening to the wild tales of King Arthur and his brave Silures, sung to the sound of horse-hair harpstrings, by some wandering minstrel, the wonder of a gaping crowd. In returning home by moonlight, after spending whole hours in this manner, Kenric would often employ the knowledge he had acquired, in laying down plans for his own future life, which it may be well imagined were none of the driest or most

common-place. He often privately determined with himself, on suffering some rebuke for his remissness, that, after having conquered all the dragons, and slain all the magicians by which he understood Europe was then infested, when he should return at the head of a large army to his native town, the case would be different with some of its inhabitants who now exercised authority over him. Towards his father, all rigid as he was, he proposed acting with filial and heroic forgiveness, but as for his uncle, the schoolmaster, he privately determined to make an example of him.

These designs, however, he kept profoundly buried in his own mind until he had made himself master (so far as his own indolence and Vuscfraë's over severity permitted) of the course of study which his uncle taught. The time now arrived for transmitting him to some more considerable mart of let-

ters, in order to complete his education, or else for initiating him into the mysteries of his father's calling. So urgent were Domnona and her brother-in-law to have the former alternative adopted, that Ailred, who cherished himself an open scorn of letters, at length gave way to their persuasions, and agreed, with a reluctant heart, to send his son to Inisfail in pursuit of scholarship. The manner of his education had impressed Kenric with no feelings of prepossession in favour of learning and of virtue; and, when he parted from his tender mother, he believed that he was giving her up for a whole community of Ailreds and Vuscfæas. Travelling with his uncle, who kindly undertook the charge of his pupil on the way, in one of those square bodied carriages used by the Anglo-Saxons of the period, they arrived at Cair Kyby,* whence they embarked in a vessel like the war-ships used

* Holyhead.

in the time of Ecbert, and on the following day cast anchor in the bay which opened from the city of Hurdles.* Travelling at a rapid rate through the territories of Laighean,† of Leis,‡ of Ossruidhe,§ of Shior, Muimhean, and finally, passing the Dal Cassian frontier, they drove at length by the great city of Luimneach na Luingas, and penetrated the solitudes of Munigharidh. The multitude and strangeness of the objects he had seen, and the places he had passed, the deep and lonely woods by which the convent was surrounded, the strange attire of its inmates, and the sense of living, for the first time, in a country not his own, encreased the apprehensions of the young Northumbrian, and made him dread the change still more as he proceeded. But as the woodland opened on their view, disclosing an

* Dublin.

† Leinster.

‡ Queen's County.

§ Ossory.

autumnal scene of industry and peace, and the ceaseless harmonies of the eternal choir resounded in the tranquil groves, he could not forbear joining in the exclamations of delight with which Vuscfraëa looked upon the celebrated scene.

Such were the principal circumstances that had distinguished the life of Kenric, ere Elim saw him first within the convent gate. On the evening after his admission, the Ithian again beheld him in the lecture room at its opening for the season. The spectacle presented on the occasion was one of uncommon splendour. The circle of massy torches which surrounded the apartment was lighted up, and shone on the faces and forms of more than two thousand pupils, of every degree. The lecturer who delivered the opening address, discharged his task to the delight of Elim, and the satisfaction of his entire

auditory. He painted, in language so eloquent, the utility of science, and dwelt with so much force upon its pleasures and advantages, that the minds of all his hearers were stimulated to its pursuit, and even the wavering fancy of the Northumbrian was for the moment fixed and elevated with a thirst of useful knowledge and of active virtue. On the following day the studies of the season commenced, and Kenric entered on his course, in company with Elim and those of his own age. The classic tongues, the imperfect systems of history, geography, astronomy, and other sciences then extant, constituted the general course laid down for the great body of the students ; while a few, intending to devote themselves to particular professions, were instructed in genealogy, in medicine, or in the composition of poetry ; for in those days, when all history, whether domestic or national, was

preserved in verse, the art last named was an important and essential branch of study.

Kenric was placed in a small apartment at no great distance from the young Ithian, where he was provided with a table, a stool, and such books as he required. About noon, hearing a bell ring, he went to the door, and perceived by the snatching of caps, tumultuous voices, leaping and hurrying out of doors, that it was the time of recreation. Closing the door of his apartment, he followed the tiny crowd, but was ashamed to thrust himself into their sports, and all were too busy in the pursuit of their own pleasures to take notice of the stranger. Oppressed by the scene of joy from which he was shut out, he walked slowly away towards the side of the little stream which flowed by the abbey, and, sitting at the foot of a thick ash, began to think of the Dene of Ouse, until the tears came plentifully

down his cheeks. In this situation he was found by three of the students who had come hither to spend their time of recreation in angling. The first was the son of a Fearbolgian chief from the Province of Spears, the second a young Danaan from Conacht, and the third was the Ithian chief who pursued his sport at a little distance behind.

“What fish is here?” said the Danaan, as he put aside a thick bough of weeping ash, and suddenly discovered Kenric musing at the other side of it. The latter turned quickly away, and hid his face.

“Let him alone,” said the Fearbolg, “it is the Saxon burgher’s son, that would have been a duke’s if he could have chosen his own father.”

“Not yet done weeping after the Northumbrian fire-logs and four meals a day,” added the Danaan, while he cast out his line, and passed the spot where Kenric was sitting.

Elim, who listened to these speeches in silence, kept his eye fixed on the trembling line in the water, while the students strolled down the bank pursuing their sport, without taking farther notice of the stranger. He looked from time to time at the friendless Anglo Saxon, until the bell sounded for the hour of study. As he rolled up his line and prepared to depart, he said aloud to Kenric :

“Thou shouldest not heed these jeering rogues, good Saxon. ’Tis the sport of those youths to see thee vexed, but if thou wouldst only laugh when they jest at thee, they would shortly give thee peace.”

“If thou wert so far from home as I am,” said Kenric, “thou wouldst not like to be jeered at by strangers.”

“Nor did I, in truth,” said Elim. “It was so with me when first I came to Muingharidh, but they soon ceased when I took all in jest, for I

spoiled their mirth when I began to turn it on my own side. But thou hast best come this way to the college, for the bell has rung."

They walked together to their lodgings, Elim, as he strolled along, assuming the patron, and letting the respectful Northumbrian into the college politics, acquainting him with their mode of life, their sports, and habits, and making enquiries of a similar nature with respect to Kenric's native place. The latter, by degrees, grew familiar and confiding, and before they separated it was agreed that Elim should call for Kenric in his room on the following day, that he might accompany him to the play-ground. At the night lecture and examination, they met again, with increased good will; and Kenric went to rest with recovered spirits, happy in the thought of having already made a friend at Muingharidh.

Scarce had the bell tolled the first signal note

of recreation on the following day, when Elim thrust in the door of the Northumbrian's room.

“Up books, and play!” he said “Come out, come out, come out!”

The Anglo-Saxon seized his barrad and they went out together. Elim introduced him at the ground by exclaiming aloud:

“Here's one at last to tell us how the Anglo-Saxons play the *Base*.”

The friend of Elim was sure to attract attention, and the students left their venerable games of picky, goal, and other youthful sports, to gaze on the new comer, and hear his speech. Kenric readily entered on the explanation that was required, initiating his hearers into all the amusing mysteries of the *prisoner's bars*, *base*, *home*, &c., and illustrating his lecture as he ended, by going through the principal manœuvres of the game. With the young, as with the old, those are most cer-

tain of applause and favour who can contribute to their interest or pleasure. The aim of Elim was entirely gained, and the Northumbrian, ere he left the ground, had the satisfaction of hearing the name of "Kenric" familiar in almost every mouth.

From this time forward Kenric's time flowed pleasantly enough. His studies, it is true, were severe, but the hours of relaxation were proportionately delightful. In some days after, while they were all at play, Kenric happened to take off his barrad, in order to suffer the cool wind to play on his head. One of the students, the same who first had found him weeping on the bank, observing the curious fashion of his hair, plaited on the crown, and cropped close behind, instead of flowing down upon the neck and shoulders, after the manner of the celebrated Irish *coolun*, said, as he leaned upon his *spwack* and gazed on Kenric :

“Anglo-Saxon, if the Prælector sees thee with that short crop, he will not leave thee long in the enjoyment of it. He’ll make an Irishman of thee, in that respect.”

Kenric, who had by this time recovered his natural spirits, replied with readiness :

“Neither head nor foot, shall thy Prælector ever make an Irishman of me. An Anglo-Saxon I was born, and an Anglo-Saxon I will die.”

“Aye,” said the other, looking back, “if thy father do not sell thee to some ceanuighe* of Port Lairge† for a load of peltry and an Irish hound.”

Kenric blushed deeply at this allusion to a disgraceful species of traffic at that time carried on between the islands.

“Thou mightest have spared,” he said, “a reproach that but half reaches me. If there be

* Merchant.

† Waterford.

sellers in England, there are buyers in Inisfail, so the shame is even betwixt us."

"Well spoken, Anglo-Saxon!" said several voices. "It is no matter," said the other speaker, "the Prælector will make thee wear the *coolun*, after all."

"Thou shalt see," replied Kenric, "if he will not be wiser than to meddle with my head."

"How! meddle! Hear ye this for disobedience!" cried the other, "methinks it is his business to meddle with it."

"With the inside it may," said Kenric, "but not with the outside."

"In good truth," said his opponent, "thou needest not grudge the fashioning of thy hair to him who has the moulding of thy brains. It is apparent on which of the two the Anglo-Saxons set most value, since thou leavest him the one

without murmuring, and fightest so stoutly for the other."

"It was not I gave him my brains to mould," said Kenric, "and even if I had, the moulding of people's brains is his business, and not the cutting of their hair. So let him leave my head alone, I would advise. I'll wear it after the Northumbrian mode, although it be the only Saxon head at college."

Saying this, he turned away, humming a verse of a song.

"The Prælector will make that youth turn a different tune," said the Danaan, as he continued his play with his companions. "He'll show him that he has a right to meddle with his head and with his ears too, if he does not change his manners."

The Prælector, however, did not manifest any hostility to the Northumbrian mode of hair

dressings. Both Kenric and the Danaan were admonished for the altercation which, by some means unknown, soon reached the ears of their superiors; but this circumstance and his growing popularity prevented the recurrence of any taunting remarks on Kenric's country or extraction. In the mean time, his friendship with the young Ithian acquired daily strength. Both were diligent, fervent, and emulous. While Kenric learned steadiness and regularity from the Ithian, the very task of instruction was for the latter in itself an additional stimulus to exertion. Both excelled in their studies, though the capacity which they displayed was different in its kind. The strength and force of Elim's intellect, his sound judgment, and love of his race, led him no less by inclination than necessity to the study of the more solid departments of literature, such as history, genealogy (which the peculiar constitu-

tion of his country rendered an important branch of knowledge,) and the walks of practical science. Kenric's imagination, and some remains of an habitual love of pleasure, though they did not hinder his proficiency in science, directed his taste more readily to the cultivation of lighter studies. Both however proceeded in their career with general distinction, and both were likewise remarkable for a quality, not always the concomitant of shining abilities, a fervent and unobtrusive piety.

CHAPTER X.

DURING the festival of Ullog, the students enjoyed a relaxation from their studies, and many parties were formed for the purpose of making excursions to the frozen lakes of Coolapish and Guir, whose mountain barrier looked stateliest in the iron garb of winter ; to Kil Molua, where the still Senan flowed calmly at the base of a clifted mountain, robed in snow and frost, and even to the scattered islets of Lough Ribh, in whose waves the detested Meibhe met her

death from the sling of Forbhuidhe. The invigorating exercise, which the tourists underwent both on foot and in the horse-skin noevogs in which they ascended the river, prepared them well for the close application of the ensuing spring. The season of Lent soon followed, during which all parties of amusement were suspended, strict silence was maintained, all recreation except such as was absolutely necessary for the health of the community laid aside, and the minds of all directed to contemplative seclusion and retreat. A general air of self restraint and seriousness seemed to pervade the college, the town and the adjoining townships, villages and cities, as if at the announcement of some great public calamity; the joyous shouting of the students at recreation hours was no longer heard; and men met in the streets, and conversed with thoughtful visages, and in an under tone. After the solemn festival of Easter

which was celebrated with magnificent processions, the ringing of bells, vocal and instrumental music, and all the demonstrations of general rejoicing, the labours of the spring began. The cattle were unhoused, the monks were busy in the field with the plough and the spade, and the husbandry of the year commenced in all its departments. On May eve, the gates of the college, the doors of the lecture room, and the lecturer's chair were decorated with green boughs and flowers still more abundantly than at the opening of the season ; the doors and windows of the town of Deochain Assian were wreathed and garlanded and the whole body of students proceeded in regular procession to the general examination and concluding address with which the season was to terminate. The answering both of Elim and of Kenric attracted general applause, and the lecturer concluded the proceedings

by pointing out the course of study which it would be proper for all to continue during the period of vacation at their private dwellings. The multitude of students then separated for the summer and autumn, during which the wealthier returned to their friends, with the exception of the few who, like Elim and the Northumbrian, were maintained within the immediate precincts of the Abbey. The poorer students, who had no homes to which they could return, were quartered on the surrounding country, and supplied, as usual, with food and attire from the revenues of the convent.

Sigibert, the son of a native of Tours, who had become one of the confidential secretaries of the celebrated Charlemagne; Rolust, a talented young Scot, from the Dal Reudimh of Albany; O'Haedha, Kenric, the Danaan, and the Fearbolg already spoken of, with the spirited young

Airtree, the only son of the monarch of that name who at this time held the throne of Leath Mogha, and one of whose palaces was in the adjacent city of Luimneach, were the most distinguished, by rank and talent, of those who remained during the summer months at Muingharidh. Under the charge of one or two members of the community, they were permitted to make excursions to those districts in the neighbourhood which even still continue to attract the admiration of travellers: to the winding shores and woody creeks of Ringmoylan, to the sunny isles of the Senan, the groves of Carbre Aodhba, and other summer clad retreats.

One morn, while they were projecting an excursion on foot to the beautiful woodland and city of Athdair, which lay not farther than a forenoon's walk toward the south, a guard of galloglachs, bearing the Dal Gassian banner, and

headed by a tioseach, arrived at the college. It was soon understood that they came for the purpose of escorting the young prince of Leath Mogha, already mentioned, to the palace of his father. Kenric, enquiring from the Danaan the cause of this unexpected event, was informed that the sister of the monarch had died on the preceding day, and that the prince was summoned home to attend the funereal rites. While they were speaking, the young prince, in tears, and accompanied by the military leader, passed the spot where they were standing. The Danaan continued to inform the Anglo-Saxon that the deceased princess was the wife of the descendant of a Druid race, who was himself the first of his name that had embraced the doctrines of the new religion. He was the brother, he said, of a Druid chief, who still maintained his ancient habits and belief, in the in-

terior of the country, and obstinately refused to admit any attempt at innovation on his secluded territory. No Christian was allowed to set foot upon the soil, and although the chieftain made his appearance in regular form at the triennial Feis, or national assembly of Tara, yet he persisted in upholding, within his own remote dominion, the Druid laws, the Druid customs, and the rites of the Druidical belief. This narrative, which he had learned from the young prince himself, the Danaan communicated in a confidential tone, while Kenric, devouring its remarkable details, accompanied him to the convent gate.

The excursion to Athdair took place before the return of Airtree to the college. The party consisted of the young Gaul Sigibert, the Danaan, the Fearbolg, Rolust, the Northumbrian, and two monks, who walked apart con-

versing with each other. O'Haedha, whose turn it was to attend in the refectory of strangers, was unable to accompany them in their walk. The old tales of Webba, now so long forgot, came back into the mind of Kenric as he followed the other students, and thought of the Druid chieftain ; of his brother, who had married the sister of the monarch, and the untimely dissolution of their union. The morning was serene and soft, and the students, after rambling through the city, and satisfying their curiosity by inspecting the shops of the artificers and other places worthy of attention, repaired to the banks of the winding and sallow-fringed Maig, to enjoy the exercise of swimming. Perceiving a great concourse of people around the eastern gate of the little city, they were informed that the funeral of the deceased princess was expected to pass through, on its way to the cele-

brated abbey of Caisil,* where it was to be interred. Before they left the place, Kenric had the satisfaction of witnessing the melancholy procession. A party of Dal Gassian galloglachs preceded the carbudh which contained the corpse, and which was followed by another, holding the widowed husband and his daughter, who seemed scarcely entered on the age of girlhood. So deeply was the imagination of the Northumbrian impressed by the spectacle, that for nearly a week after Elim observed that he was not the same in his sports and studies.

On the return of Airtree, Kenric regarded him with an interest such as he had not felt before. It happened that both the prince and the Northumbrian were obliged to attend on the same morning in the refectory of strangers, an apartment in which all travellers were provided

* Cashel.

with refreshment and repose for a day and night. The duties of attending on the strangers, of serving them at meals, providing them with water and napkins for their hands, and washing their feet before they went to rest, were taken in turn by the students in the Abbey, both as an exercise of humility, and a means of accustoming them to the offices of charity. As they entered the refectory, Airtree said to the Northumbrian:

“Thou wilt have some friends of mine amongst the guests to-day.”

“What friends?” said Kenric.

“A cousin, and a kind of uncle.”

“Indeed?”

“They are on their way to the mountains in some distant territory, where I shall see no more of them perhaps for years.”

“What! leave thy father’s court, and the land of the Dal Gas?”

“ Yes ; and although I had rather lose my hand than lose my cousin, I like her father’s resolution.”

He said no more, and Kenric, though with curiosity highly excited, was unwilling to ask questions. Soon after the brother of the Druid entered with his daughter, and Kenric, while he served them at their morning meal, in company with a number of guests of every description, who were placed according to their rank at table, perused their features and persons with the keenest interest. The father was of a cheerful, though somewhat pale, countenance, with a staid religious expression in his manner and aspect, though unmingled with the least severity or sternness. The daughter had the large dark eyes and hair of her country, with that peculiar air of liveliness, affection, and domestic reserve, by which the women of Inisfail appeared to mingle the

vivacity of Sigibert's countrywomen with the sobriety of those of Kenric. After their departure, which took place immediately on the termination of the morning meal, Kenric heard it rumoured, amongst the students, that both father and daughter had departed in extreme poverty; that the former had refused to retain any longer the slightest claim to any of those possessions which he had held together with the deceased princess, and was now on the way to his native territory, in the same condition as when he had left it, with the exception of his altered faith and the young companion of his widowhood, whom his Dal Gassian consort had bequeathed him. All these circumstances strongly excited the interest of Kenric. Time, however, rolled by. The severities of study, and the pursuit of active recreation, checked the ramblings of imagination; and the tendency to romance,

which this story had nearly called forth again within his mind, was checked once more in its commencement.

CHAPTER XI.

AT sixteen years of age, Elim, the young Ithian chief, was transferred from the college of Muingharidh, to the military school at Tamrach. On returning from a ramble through Deochain Assain, Kenric was astonished to see a magnificent carbudh, attended by a large body of horse drawn up at the gates of the college; but his distress may be imagined when he was given to understand that they were intended to convey his friend Elim from the place, for the space of two whole years. At the expiration of that

period it was proposed that he should return, in order to complete his education previous to his final return to his native shore of Inbhersceine.

Having made his adieus, Elim ascended the carbudh, and was driven away, leaving lonesomeness behind him, with his superiors, his companions, and most of all with Kenric. At the military school he underwent a course of study and of discipline equally severe as at Muingharidh, though different in its kind. The number of pupils was considerable, though not so great as at Muingharidh; for as it was not only the exercise, but the science of war that was taught in this academy, the disciples were taken solely from the ranks of the royal and the noble. At day-break, the blast of a stuaic awoke the active community, within a short time after which, under a stated penalty, the students were compelled to appear dressed and armed on the field, when, after a

general inspection of arms and accoutrements, they proceeded to their daily exercise. Some whirled the Kran-tabal, a kind of sling, a weapon of deadly advantage in the ancient wars of the isle, which was laden, not with stones, but with balls, cast for the purpose, of the same brazen matter that was used for the blades of their cutting weapons, and sometimes for the heads of javelins and spears. Others practised at a painted target, with the diminutive hemp-stringed bow and piercing arrow, which, next to the skene, formed the most fatal weapon of the kerne and light-armed horse. Some flung the dart, the javelin, and the spear. Some fenced with the heavy sword and skene, and learned at the same time how to use the wicker skiagh for their own defence, and render it most unavailing to the safety of their opponent. For some hours, about noon, they studied in their own apart-

ments the various class-books necessary to their profession, amongst which that of Jonnaruidh of the Stipend, the celebrated Ard-righ, who is said to be the author of the first treatise on military tactics that was ever written, held a chief place. The afternoon was devoted to the management of the horse, and the day concluded, as at Muingharidh, by public instructions and a general examination. The students were, moreover, initiated not only into the use, but the manufacture, of their weapons, and an armourer's forge was erected within the precincts of the college, for the purpose of affording them practice in this laborious branch of their art. They were, moreover, obliged, after the manner of the Roman legionaries, to grind their own flour, and dress their own food, and even to make their own attire ; for the college only supplied them with the raw material of every article of diet and of

clothing. Elim, who was not ignorant of those exercises when he left Rath-Aidan, became ere long proficient in the whole. But their course of instruction was extended to a still more comprehensive scale.

The college comprised a vast extent of ground of every description, situate on either side of that unhappy stream whose name has since become the watch-word of disunion in the luckless isle through which it flows. The land consisted of woodland, crag, and marsh, together with one or two small islets, which lay in the bed of the river. Here the students were made to exercise in mock encounters, and even, at stated seasons, to go through all the manœuvres and adventures of a regular campaign. Sometimes they were employed in forming *duns*, or *raths*, and other fortifications; and sometimes in attacking those of the adverse party. They were

accustomed to dress their food on the field; and, on particular occasions, to spend whole nights in the open air, and, in the severest weather; having no other covering than the great frieze mantle which Spenser calls the *house* of an Irishman. At eighteen years of age, Elim received from the hand of Niall, the Ard-righ, the golden *fleasg* and collar of the *niagh nase*, and took the vows which were necessary to his assuming the rank of *Curaidhe*, or knight. He was next sent to the Lis-laoch-ton, a marine academy on the shores of the Senan, where he learned the management of the helm, the oar, the sail, and the uses of all kinds of shipping, from the small coiti to the single-sailed bark which ventured on the open seas.

Thus hardened in mind and frame, and fitted for a life of activity and danger, Elim returned, at the close of his nineteenth year, to receive the

last instructions of his earliest masters. Proficient in the knowledge of his country's history, its geography, its laws, its resources, and its wants, he had determined, even from boyhood, to devote his life to its improvement ; and this direction of his mind and feelings had already given an air of noble energy and decision to his manner, his speech, and his deportment, which, on their reunion, impressed Kenric with a sentiment of admiration, mingled with a painful sense of growing inferiority. The young Northumbrian, it is true, had not suffered the interval to pass away without distinction. He had written poems, which attracted the applause of all who read them, and he had also manifested considerable skill in argument and subtlety of intellect on metaphysical subjects ; but his mind was still unoccupied by any steady purpose, and his fancy still unregulated. Both friends, at meeting, were struck by

the change which the growth of character and time had occasioned.

Summer, the period of the annual recess at the college, had begun to open, when Elim (already entered on his twentieth year) completed the course of instruction originally laid down for him. On the morning of the young Ithian's departure, Kenric accompanied him through the wood, from the city where, as they advanced in youth, they had taken up their residence, to the convent gate, in order that he might bid farewell to the aged abbot and the regent. The sound of the perpetual choir broke on their ears as they advanced, and at the same time the morning sun darted his first fresh light from the mountains of Shior Muimhean. While they paused, with their faces turned toward Luimneach, the voices of the religious were heard distinctly chaunting the words of Sedulius,

“A solis ortus cardine ;”

which had for ages before saluted the wakening dawn in many a similar retreat. The young friends looked and listened in silence, enjoying the delicious scene with that exquisite happiness untroubled minds can feel in contemplating the excellence of nature. While they stood thus silent, a troop of the Dal Gassian Marc Sliadh, or armed horsemen, rode by, their brazen weapons gleaming in the sunshine, and their sanguine banner waving in the wind. The eye of Kenric followed the bloody hand and boastful motto, until distance had rendered it illegible.

“I could bear parting better,” said the Northumbrian, at length breaking silence, “if there were any hope of our ever meeting again on the same terms as we have done. But we are about to be separated, not only by space, but by condition. In the college we were Elim and Kenric

only, but now thou art a prince, and I shrink back again into the son of a Northumbrian grazier. Well, it is vain to talk of that; but I had rather hold any rank beneath thy banner, than be the richest grazier in the Dene, or the wisest scholar in Cair Grant. I have longed to be a soldier ever since I witnessed the muster at the Feis of Caisil, in my journey hither, with old Vuscfraea for my guide. (It is so long since I have seen him now, I cannot call him rigid as I used.) Up with the sun at morn, sweeping along the boundaries, now lost for days together in trackless woods and lonely fastnesses, now shining among the nobles and protectors of the land in the banquet halls of Tamrach or of Cruachan, now shouting in the field, now hanging on the musical praise of the filea at his evening festival, what life is so delightful, so full of variety and action? With the example of thy great ancestor,

the founder of thy sept before thee, and the hearts and weapons of that sept to aid thee in resembling him, what mayest thou not accomplish? while I, thanks to my mother and Vuscfræa, must waste my life in study."

"Thou entirely deceivest thyself," said Elim, after a pause, "in supposing, that because the knowledge of arms is necessary to my place it shall be the leading theme of my ambition. My views are very different."

"What are they, then?" asked Kenric.

Elim seemed for some time absorbed in reflection, at length, signifying to his friend that they should walk forward, while he spoke, he related to him the scene which had taken place between his mother and himself in his boyhood, and which had made a deep impression on his mind.

"The more I have seen and thought since

then," he continued, "the more confirmed have I become in the determination I had formed, almost upon the instant, to obey the words of Matha. Yes, dear unhappy isle," he said, bending down, to the surprise of Kenric, and kissing the soil on which they trod, "I rule but a small portion of thy territory, but from this hour I devote myself, my mind, my knowledge, all that I am, and all that I command, to the welfare and the glory of the whole."

So saying, Elim hastened to bid farewell to the superiors of the college, while Kenric, hardly knowing whether to smile or to admire, remained near the gateway to witness his departure.

CHAPTER XII.

A GREAT number of students were assembled to look upon the splendid car and large body of horse, which waited to convey the accomplished Ithian to his small dominion, and to bid a long farewell to their old schoolfellow. Having received the benediction of his college superiors, who warmly exhorted him to persevere in his course, while his heart was kindling at their praise, he left the college for the last time, and hastened, an accomplished scholar, to the gateway where his mother's messengers awaited him. The students pressed upon him with ardent expressions

of attachment and regret, and cheered him loudly as he drove away.

Before he had proceeded far on the road which led towards Inbhersceine, Elim turned for an instant to look upon the sunlit abbey. Since he had received the summons of his parent to return to his paternal roof, the idea of leaving a place where he had led a life so full of occupation and of even-minded diligence, had daily become more painful. Objects before regarded carelessly, as things familiar, grew interesting, now that he was about to lose them. His glance fell nowhere that it was not reminded of some past impression of pleasure ; some lesson of virtue taught ; some word of commendation from his instructors ; some little self-denial, practised for the pleasure of a companion, or in compliance with a cherished principle. The sight of his schoolfellows, at a distance, hastening to and from the abbey, the

view of the remote mountains, the murmur of the little city of letters, the calm religious stillness of the convent shades, the sound of its eternal choir, now that he was about to part with them all for life, deepened on his affections to a degree that even amounted to anguish. From this mood of reflection, however, he was aroused by the voice of Moyel, reminding him that they must pass the Dal Gassian frontier before night. Resuming the action of the reins, and followed by his troop of galloglachs, who looked at their young chieftain with delight, Elim hastened on his journey without further delay.

In a few days, Elim passed, with his escort, the lonely and broken Riada that frowned upon the tranquil surface of Loch Lene; the fair vallies of Glen Fais and of Glen Scotá (made interesting by the tombs of the Milesian heroines); and entered at length on the wild and rocky territories

of the race of Ith. For a long space he now found himself encompassed by scenery of the most rugged and profitless description, mountains without sublimity, and vallies without beauty, breaking upon him in dreary succession during the lapse of his last day's journey. Resigning the useless carbudh, he now cheered his sure-footed hobbie across the broken steeps of Esk, a defile of that gloomy range of mountain, not unaptly termed, by some topographers, the Vallis Juncosa. Now he passed a lonely cluster of skin-thatched peillices, which here assumed the title of a brugh, with a few spots of tillage reclaimed from the waste, and herds of sheep and cattle grazing among the crags. Sometimes a herring gull, or heron, floating gracefully through the fields of air above his head, indicated his nearer approach to those coasts on which his home was situate, and at intervals the cry of a gannet, winging its way toward its nest in the

lonely Skelig, startled the echoes amongst the barren excavations of the mountain. More than once, also, his eye encountered, in the extensive solitude, the solitary figure of a monk, or lonely anchorite, hastening forward on his mission, or tilling the little garden that supplied his hermitage. Towards evening, as he rode along within sight of the mountains of Sliabh Miskisk, some traces of a kindlier soil, and the scent of more familiar airs, began to greet him on his way. The fir and overgrown buckthorn no longer held solitary dominion in the wilds. The heath was diversified by the white-blossomed mountain avens, the tormentil, and other wild flowers. Clusters of the smaller shrubs became more frequent in the clefts of rocks and along the mountain sides. The way ran coiling among broken defiles, presenting an intermixture of rock and foliage, of beauty and abruptness. Once more the lake-

haunting arbutus, which had not visited his sight since he left at morning the shores of the dark Loch Lene, now waved its pointed leaves above him from some overhanging rock, and seemed to welcome him again to a new region of beauty and delight. At length his hobbie, with less laborious step and drooping head, descended an easier road. Here, the sun struck his level light through the top of some old oak, or lofty yew, upon his right, while the evening silence was broken by the full round note of the song-thrush, concealed in some shaded thicket, or by the silvery trill of the wood-lark, which here, like the nightingale, prolonged its music far into the night. A fresher wind soon rustled amid the beeches, and that indescribable murmur, almost inaudible to the sense, yet filling the whole air, which the ocean sends forth in its calmest hours, announced his approach to the sea-side. At length, the leafy screen vanished

behind him, and the varied shores, the tufted points and scattered islands of his native place, broke suddenly in all their sunset beauty on his sight. Before him, the bright green waters of the majestic inlet crossed by a glancing light, from the still distant sea, now broke in glittering wavelets on a sunlit beach, and now rolled dark and silent at the foot of some aged rock. Far in the distance, on a wooded hill which overlooked the bay, arose the walls of Rath-Aidan, the patrimonial dwelling of the young Ithian, a building composed in part of stone and part of wood. It was guarded by ramparts of earth and trunks of trees, which, being now covered with a screen of grass and wild flowers, gave the appearance of beauty to what was meant for terror. The eminence on which it stood was sequestered in a wooded and rocky glen which opened on the bay of Inbher Sceine. A stream flowed by it, spanned

by two bridges not far remote from each other, between which the water was dilated into a dark and waveless pool. One of those bridges was upheld by a lofty semicircular arch, and being of an old date, was covered with a graceful drapery of ivy, bramble, and other creeping shrubs, which drooped downward to meet their own reflection in the stream. At summer times, such as the present, its battlements were gay with fox-glove, briar-blossoms, and other wild flowers. The other bridge was a ruder structure of wood, serving to connect the main track with a bye-path that led to the foot of Rath-Aidan.

Such was the home which Elim had left in his boyhood, and to which he now returned. He was met at the palisading which surrounded the foot of the hill, by Clothra, the mother of Moyel, and his own nurse, who gave him the first “cead faltah” on his return, and informed him, on their

way to the ramparts, that the sails of the Fion Geinte had been seen in the offing only a few days before. Before Elim could make any observation upon this occurrence, he saw his mother, with a smiling countenance, awaiting him afar upon the threshold of the dwelling. Putting spurs to his horse, he hastened to the gateway, where he alighted with the assistance of a daltin, and advanced through the crowds of armed men who filled the Rath,, to receive the greeting of his only parent.

Tall, beyond the usual stature of her sex, with the grace of years and the dignity of station mingled in her demeanour, the protectress of the sept of O'Haedha received her long absent child into her arms. While she laid her hand upon his head, and looked in his features, as if tracing in them some indistinct resemblance, Elim did not fail to remark that his mother's hair was grown

greyer, and her hand more sinewy than when he had left home. Still, however, there was the same mild firmness of expression in her eye, and calm domestic contentedness of spirit in her smile, which even in his childhood had been to Elim like continual sunshine.

“Thou art welcome to us, Elim, and welcome in a needful time,” she said. “How tall thou art, my boy, and manly, too ! See, Clothra, see those shoulders.”

“His father’s all across,” said Clothra, lifting her hand, “his father’s brawn and sinew every limb. Let the Fion Geinte look to it ; aye, and the great Dal Gas, for all their bloody hand.”

“His father’s hair, his father’s brow and eye,” continued Matha. “My honey child ; my Elim ! Let us not enter yet. My brother, O’Driscol, and his chiefs are in the Rath, and

nothing there is heard but war and arms. His father's gait, too, Clothra. Such a warrior as he was thou wilt be, Elim ; as brave, as good, as generous,—but wiser."

As she said these words, Matha laid her hand upon her brow, and lowered her countenance for some moments. Elim, who knew the cause of her dejection, maintained a respectful silence until the sudden cloud had left his mother's mind.

"The wily Baseg !" she exclaimed at length. "I say forgive him ; may he be forgiven ! But his deeds are manifest, and his treason deadly. False to his creed, his country, and his race, he has made it virtue to denounce his name, to mark him out for caution and avoidance. His country and his kin are both well rid of him. But let that subject rest. Moyel !" she continued, turning quickly to the seneschal,

“and you, dear kinsmen, do you not see your chieftain’s son returned ? Give Elim the *cead millia faltah*.”

The *kerne* and *galloglachs*, who crowded the Rath, had only been waiting Matha’s silence, and now greeted their young chieftain with shouts of welcome. All bared their heads, some flung their *skenes* and girdles on his path, and greeted him with gestures of the most ardent attachment. Elim, accustomed to the calm and moderated manners of the religious in his convent, was as much surprised as gratified by the eager and untutored affection of his kinsmen, and the fury that was in their very joy. He met them, however, in their own manner ; returned their ardent greetings, and felt in the very depths of his heart the glow benevolence feels when conscious first of power to work its wishes.

“His father’s child from head to foot,” said

Moyel, as Elim accompanied his mother into the Rath, “only kinder in the eye, like Matha.”

“The very air of the head,” said another, “and the fashion of pulling the green bonnet to the left. I would follow him to the world’s end.”

“Let him be whose son he will,” said a grey-haired galloglach, “and let him lead thee where he will, thou never wert more willing to obey than he is ready and able to command.”

Accompanying his mother into the dwelling, Elim found it crowded with many faces of his kindred, which, though changed by time, he yet remembered well. Amongst those which most directly caught his eye, was that of O’Driscoll, his uncle, already mentioned, who was conversing familiarly with some of his more aged officers upon the favourite topic of arms.

At the moment when Elim and Matha made their appearance, several of the young officers had started from their places, on hearing the shouts outside, and were hastening to the doorway. They gave way, however, on perceiving Matha and her son, and suffered them to advance to the Sior Lamh.

“What youth is this?” said O’Driscoll, looking on Matha as she placed Elim’s hand in his; “Is it possible? Is this my little kinsman, Elim? My little warrior, whom I taught to use a javelin almost before his tongue. Those hands and limbs? that trunk? Is it possible? So is it; so it is; while we have been wearing our old frames in war, this youth has been shooting up as strong and fast as a young pine. Look hither! what a chest! Hut tut, this boy will thrash a score of Dal Gas yet. Dost thou remember me?”

“Surely I do, O’Driscol,” answered Elim,
“thee and the javelin too.”

“Ah, but thou comest from Muingharidh now, where thou last learned to use thy tongue in preference. Well, that is right. Letters and piety become a soldier. Well, well, the monks are right to make thee learned. Thy brain and heart are now complete in all their exercises. What, Elim?—Well, but there is something more that thou canst learn of such poor dunces as O’Driscol only. Could the abbot of Muingharidh (with reverence be it spoken) teach thee to dart the spear, or whirl the sling? Is there a monk in the college (without meaning any slight) who could leave a Dal Gas headless with one sweep of a skene? For books and rules the monks are very well, but I speak it not in scorn or disrespect, they are better teachers of peace than war, by far.”

“I found them so, in truth,” said Elim.

“Aye, didst thou, Elim? Well, let us not slight the religious for all that. What if this sword be hacked from heel to point against the shields of the Dal Gas, shall I despise the monk for his misfortune? There’s many an honest man that never drew a blow in all his life. What if a monk be ignorant whether he should use the skene or javelin in a close encounter, he may have virtues we know nothing of? But we will teach thee how to use thy limbs.”

“Thou’lt leave him in the Rath to guard the coasts against the Fion Geinte,” said Matha.

“To guard the coasts against the Fion Geinte! against the fogs and vapours!” answered the Sior Lamh. “What canst thou know of war and government? To guard the coast? to prate and idle here with thee by the hearth while the kerne were sleeping underneath their mantles in the sunshine on the ramparts?”

“ They slept not so, dear brother,” said Matha, “ when Baseg menaced all the sept with ruin.”

“ I thought we should hear of Baseg,” said O’Driscoll ; “ I had as lief sit yonder with thy distaff in my hand, and teach thy maids to spin, as hear thee meddle in affairs of policy and war ; or any of thy sex. Go twirl the wheel ; go card the fleece ; go turn the quern, good sister ; but leave discourse of arms and government to those who are able to use and to direct them. A man and woman never yet changed places with dignity or with advantage. ”

“ Thou art hard ; thou art somewhat hard, dear brother,” said Matha, smiling, “ but thou hast reason. ”

While they sat conversing on topics of arms, or on familiar recollections of days gone by, numbers of the nearer members of the family appeared with their bright-faced congratulations,

and the dance and song were shortly added to the amusements of the evening. Among the warmest, as well as the most skilful, Elim recognised the voice and instrument of the grey-haired Conla, the hereditary filea, or bard of the sept, accompanying himself in the following song of welcome :

I.

Falta volla ! falta volla ! welcome to the mountains !
Falta volla ! welcome to your native woods and fountains !
 To hear the harper play again—and the shouts that greet thee ;
Falta volla ! how it glads the widow's heart to meet thee !
Falta volla ! falta volla !
 Welcome to Rath-Aidan.

II.

Shule a volla ! shule a volla ! through our parted island,
 Many a friend and foe hast thou in valley and in highland.
 But whene'er the friends are false—when the foes distress thee,
Shule a volla ! here are ready weapons to redress thee.
Shule a volla ! Shule a volla !
 Shelter in Rath-Aidan.

III.

Ire a volla ! ire a volla ! far in Corca's vallies,
 When around the Bloody Hand the routed Dal Gas rallies ;
 When the groans of dying friends fill the air above thee,
Ire a volla ! there are hands to help and hearts to love thee.
Ire a volla ! ire a volla !
 Hasten to Rath-Aidan.

Elim rewarded the minstrel with more than the customary fee, and added to the gift the kindest enquiries for his welfare and that of his household ; reminding him of the evenings in which he had learned from him the use of the cruit, and listened to the songs of his ancestral fame. To these remembrances the old bard listened with a gratified smile, shaking his white hairs, touching with the lightest motion the strings of his clarsech, and saying from time to time “ They are gone, agra—he is dead—mayest thou be like them ! ”

After some further converse, Elim was made known to the chiefs of his sept, with whom he was so soon to be associated in arms ; to Kieran, the young master of the horse ; to Carbre, the old and experienced tioseach, and others. He revisited with a delight that may be easily conceived all parts of the dwelling of his childhood, the

hall of strangers, the garden, and the rest ; after which he returned to spend an evening of festivity with his mother and her guests. Thus passed the evening of the young Ithian's return to his home. So joyous an occasion had not visited the dwelling since he had left it years before.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON closing his five-and-twentieth year, preparations were made for celebrating, in appropriate style, the entrance of Elim on the duties of his government. At an early hour on an appointed day, the valley of Rath-Aidan was crowded with the assembled members of the sept, of every age and condition, clad in their gayest attire, and bearing in their hands the boughs of trees, and banners of various hues. The sides of the undulating hills, the bridges, and the borders of the stream, were crowded with festal groups, and

music sounded from many an instrument, now obsolete and forgotten as the fingers that awoke them. A council was held within the Rath, consisting of the heads of the principal households in the territory, at which the claim of Elim to the government and title of O'HÆEDHA was discussed, and fully established. The gate of the Rath was then thrown open, and Elim, attired in a moss-dyed crimson robe, and with his head bare, appeared amongst the people, on foot, and followed by the principal officers of his household, who were to be likewise his assistants in the government. These were the aged Mac Firbis, who still retained his post of Ard brehoun, or chief lawyer; Fearchorb, the senachie; the physician Fihgnin, whose three daltadhs, though long arrived at man's estate, still continued to exercise the healing art under the superintendence of their old instructor, and whose solemnity of

visage seemed to have increased with their years ; Daithi, the *dresbdeartach*, or story-teller ; Olliol, the crotarie, or harper ; and Conla, the aged poet of the Rath. Thus accompanied, and followed by the people, Elim proceeded along the valley, until they arrived at a spot where rose a grassy mound, at no great distance from a large though low-roofed church. Here, standing on the summit of the hill, and in the sight of all the people, Elim took the oaths usually administered at the inauguration of the sovereigns of every degree, binding himself to protect religion, the laws, and to administer impartial justice. After the celebration of a solemn high mass, a consecrated wand of peeled osier was placed in the hand of the young chieftain by Fearchorb, who, at the same instant, laid his girdle and birrede at his feet, and greeted him with the title of O'HAEDHA. The word flew from lip to lip, and at length arose

from the whole multitude in a shout that made the hills re-echo. Bursts of joyous music broke from the numerous bands that thronged the valley, and the chieftain was reconducted to the Rath, amid loud and noisy demonstrations of general rejoicing. The day was enlivened with various amusements, and concluded with an entertainment of the most sumptuous kind.

Elim did not disappoint the hopes of his instructors and his friends. On assuming the government of his sept, he began to put in immediate execution those plans for its improvement which he had already formed. He established schools of general education throughout his territory, increasing the number of instructors by diminishing that of the brehouns, or lawyers. He admitted, to an equal participation in these advantages, the few Druid families residing within his boundaries, well knowing that the surest

mode of disarming prejudice, is by acquiring confidence. He enforced the strictest penalties against all dissensions and quarrels between families, a vice which, perhaps more than any other circumstance, has contributed to the misery, and eventually to the ruin, of the island. He punished drunkenness as a felonious offence, holding those in some degree answerable for the worst breach of social order, who voluntarily deprive themselves of the natural moral safeguards. He took little pains to encourage foreign commerce, but a great deal in the promotion of internal industry, knowing that the one will follow of itself in the footsteps of the other ; and he encouraged and protected religious foundations, being convinced, that, next to intolerance, the worst policy which a government can adopt is the neglect of religion.

Nor did Elim, in his immediate circle, fail to

secure the love and admiration of his associates. He soon discovered by experience the truth of the axiom, that, of all the means useful for effecting a reformation amongst men, personal example is far the most efficacious: and, though it may sometimes fail of success, without it not even miracles can work the change. He manifested, in the discharge of his civil and military duties, the same firmness and alacrity of mind which he had already manifested in his scholastic studies; and became, ere long, as much respected and beloved as he had been at Muingharidh, at Tamrach, and at Lis-laoch-ton. Yet he was not without censurers. His love of peace made the young accuse him of deficiency in spirit, and his changes in the government seemed to the old and prejudiced to augur self-conceit, and a desire of innovation. But Elim proceeded steadily in his course, and the lapse of two years gave, in their

good effects, convincing proof of the wisdom of his measures.

The recollection of the inhuman outrage in which his father lost his life, pressed frequently upon the mind of Elim ; but he rejected, with abhorrence, the suggestions of revenge which were thrown out from time to time by many of the elder warriors of the sept. Notwithstanding the strong censure of O'Driscoll, who had long since returned to his father's residence, Matha's desire (no unfrequent occurrence,) was the one eventually adopted with regard to the scene of the young chieftain's duties. Except, however, so far as the preservation of internal discipline was concerned, the life which he pursued, was untroubled and inactive, and for nearly two years after his return, the red deer of the hills were the only sufferers to his new accomplishments.

One forenoon, while he rode with a party of

his companions in arms near the foot of the Sliabh Miskisk range, where he had been tracing out the plan of a new road, the conversation turned on the conduct of Moyel, Elim's senechal, who, during an incursion upon some pasture lands, of which he had the charge some days before, had prudently secreted himself, while the marauders drove the cattle.

“Did'st thou not cleave his roguish head in two?” said Kieran, the hair-brained young captain of horse, who rode upon the left of Elim.

“Poor fellow! why should I do so,” answered Elim: “why should not the poor fellow save his bones from breaking?” and why should I give a timid shepherd the punishment of a timid soldier?”

“Thou an O'Haedha,” said he on the left, “and tolerate a coward?”

“I say, hear Elim,” said Carbre, the grey-

haired warrior, who rode close behind, "it is a chieftain's praise to save the blood of his sept."

"It was not such maxims," said the former speaker, looking back over his shoulder, "that kept up the clash of arms for a year and a day at Fiontragha harbour."

"In good truth," said the elder warrior, "that year and a day was a year at least too long, if it ever passed at all, a matter which I strongly doubt. O'Haedha is no Dara Doun, no Fion Mac Comhal, although he lives not far from Fiontragha. He fights to save life, not to waste it. But, to please thee, good Moyel should have killed the whole troop, single-handed, if not eaten them."

"Well," said the captain of the hobbelers, "I would that good might come of all this meddling in peace and policy. Your civil government is to me the knottiest subject for a ruler; it

is so difficult to keep people united when they are at peace. In war they must stand by each other, and no thanks. I had rather lead a dozen townships in the field than govern one at home."

"It is therefore I made thee that thou art," said Elim, smiling.

"And what does O'Haedha hope to effect by peace?" said Kieran, "except to encourage such outrages as this in question."

"My plan is," said Elim, "and I desire your hearty concurrence and favourable construction: first, to confine myself to the defence of my own territory, to strengthen it by improving the character and condition of its inhabitants. Next, to prevail on Airtree, the monarch of Leath Mogha, to use his influence in promoting union amongst the princes of this portion of the isle, by establishing some general system of trade; and afterwards, when I take my place in the national

Feis of Tamrach, to use all my exertions for the amelioration of the laws of property and succession, of thanistry and gavel-kind. Could I but see these changes once accomplished, I should die contented in the thought of leaving my native land united and secure, and no longer exposed by internal discord to the danger of foreign conquest. If this be accomplished, Inisfail may yet continue prosperous and happy ; if not, she will become the prey of some foreign invader, and never again, perhaps, see sovereigns of her own."

"Thou designest great things," said Kieran.

"I would they may not play thee false."

"Let his people play him true," said Carbre,

"and he will soon become more terrible in his love of peace than any of the bardic phantoms of Fiontragha in their thirst of gore and action."

"Truce to the argument, good captains, both of you," said Elim, "for yonder comes Moyel,

shouting with all his force. Hold ! What is that he waves ! A broken spear ! Away, they are returned upon the lands—he points to the hills. Follow—farrah ! Away ! Rouse all the kerne !—Come with me, galloglachs ! Away !”

So saying, and reiterating the war cry of his sept till it resounded and was re-echoed on the farther shores of the bay, he gave his horse full rein, and galloped, followed by the troop of slingers and galloglachs immediately behind him, in the direction of the hill where Moyel stood. Scarce waiting to hear from him an account of the disaster which had taken place, he hastened forward on the route of the retreating plunderers, the greater part of whom, on his approach, formed themselves into line in order to receive him, while a small party continued to drive on the captured cattle. The dress and arms of the enemy pronounced them strangers, not only to the eye of

Elim, but to all his companions. The conflict which ensued was short and fierce. Numbers and place were both in Elim's favour, and, before an hour elapsed, he had either slain or made prisoners of all the troop but one, a young warrior, better armed and mounted than the rest, who, on seeing the cattle rescued, and his men defeated, quickly gave over the single-handed contest with the young Ithian chief, and fled toward the mountains. Elim, accompanied by his two companions already named, pursued him into a long and lonely defile that led to the woody interior of the country. His speed did not diminish when he beheld the stranger, still far apart, approaching the Glen of Oaks, on the frontier of his patrimonial territory, beyond which his father had fallen a victim to the Hooded People. He still gave a loose rein to his horse, nor did he slacken speed until, after gradually gaining ground on his

pursuer, the stranger disappeared amongst the cliffs at a great distance, and was seen no more.

By this time Elim found that he likewise had far outstripped his own companions, and rode over a wide stony track of mountain ground with no other companion than a large-limbed hound, which had kept pace with his master during the pursuit. The sun had journeyed far into the west, and Elim looked back upon the barren gaps and jutting rocks which had passed so swiftly by him in the ardour of the pursuit, but which, now that his time was shortened, seemed as if extended to a weary length. He thought of waiting for his companions, but then he had passed so many clefts and vallies since he left them, that it was as unlikely they could find, as that he could retrace, his way. Proceeding onward, he found himself ere long ascending a rocky pass which separated two stupendous mountains. Osgur, the hound,

was standing on the side of a craggy steep, on which might be discerned the traces of a broken pathway. The dog looked back from the height, and wagged his tail invitingly ; but the ascent was too steep even for the mountain-bred hobbie which Elim rode. As the sun sunk, the shadows slowly covered the eastern side of the wild pass, and Elim, making fast his hobbie where he stood, ascended the path already mentioned, in order to command a more extensive view of his position. The dog, which seemed only to await this movement of compliance, bounded gaily up the steep, and, after some time, disappeared upon the other side. As Elim, after a toilsome ascent, approached the sunlit summit of the crag, the sweet air which arose from the other side seemed to announce a scene of softer character than those which he had passed, and so indeed it proved. Standing on the summit of the craggy height, he beheld be-

neath him a deep coom, or valley, environed by three gigantic mountains. That on which he stood was broken, craggy, and in some places precipitous. On his right arose another, less rocky, but gloomier, loftier, and grander in its character. Between these and the third, which extended at greater length on the opposite side, the wooded vale lay tranquil and beautiful, cherishing with its luxuriant verdure the feet of its gigantic guardians. The mountain pass upon his right was intersected by a river which, running into the vale, formed in the midst a wide and stilly lake. At the far extremity of the recess appeared an outlet to the open country, through which the stream, after resting in the quiet bosom of the vale, recommenced its broken course, and disappeared amid the windings of the crag and woodland. The feature which chiefly fixed the attention of the young chieftain was a spot of land almost sur-

rounded by the waters of the lake, and only connected with the opposite shore by a narrow strip of ground, which never rose sufficiently high above the surface of the water to break the insular character of the little spot. Here, from a dense and lofty grove of oak issued several broad and beaten pathways, some leading to the water's edge, where some currachs were fastened to the shore, and some to the neck of land already described. In the midst of this grove arose the dark and shrub-covered roof of some apparently extensive building; but what it might be the distance and the intervening foliage prevented Elim from discerning with distinctness. There appeared no other dwelling within his view, nor did he lose much time in looking for any. An object of more quickening interest to him had already arrested his attention, for the height afforded him an extensive view of the tract of country he had crossed. Perceiving

that he might more speedily regain his own frontier by following the track of the river, crossing the valley, and issuing forth at the outlet already mentioned, he hastily returned to the place where he had left the animal. The time appeared just sufficient to enable him to reach his home by daylight, and he had no cause to know that the land on which he stood was the territory of any avowed or suspected enemy of his house. Leading his hobbie down the steep, he remounted and rode along the borders of the lake at a slow pace, for the animal was already weary. The beauty of the place seemed still more exquisite as he entered the immediate precincts of the retreat. The trees seemed alive with various singing birds, and although the wind was high and loud upon the mountain top, and the heat of the sun's rays distressing, though at evening, the air within the vale was cool, delicious, and refreshing. Not-

withstanding his haste, he had curiosity enough to enter the little islet already mentioned, and to explore its woody recesses. As he approached the oaken grove, he saw in the centre an open space before the unbarred gateway of a building which had somewhat the character of a place of worship, though not such as Elim was accustomed to frequent. The walls were of oak planks smoothed with the plane, and the roof of reeds. In the centre of a small green on one side, appeared a huge pyre of wood, arranged as if for burning. No human being, however, appeared in sight, and this, connected with the stillness of the place and the lone beauty of the surrounding scenery, gave an air of enchantment to the whole that made Elim think of his young Northumbrian schoolfellow. The open gateway as he ventured farther, gave him a view of the richly decorated interior of the building. On a

small shrine of crystal, far within, were painted the effigies of the sun, moon, and several of the greater stars. These indicated a Druidical temple, and Elim suddenly called to mind that this eve was the first of November, the day of the annual festival of Samhuin, the great goddess of the planet-worshippers. With this remembrance a suspicion of a more startling nature darted on his mind, and feeling involuntarily for his arms, he hurried from the place with more anxiety of mind than he had yet experienced. Riding hastily along the lake, he soon reached and penetrated the outlet before described. But the consequences of the day's adventure were not so soon to terminate.

He had left the valley more than two miles behind, and now entered a close and wooded pass, which he knew to be at no great distance from his own frontier. Here, while he guided

his hobbie with a careful rein over the uneven ground, he was startled by a sudden noise in the hazel bushes which he had passed. Before he could look round a heavy figure had leaped upon the horse behind him, a pair of gaunt and muscular arms had compressed his waist, the reins were snatched from his grasp, and with a violent effort, the new rider turned the frightened horse aside, and sped rapidly away in a different direction from that in which he had been travelling. The Ithian endeavoured to turn and look at least upon this strange assailant, but in vain. The iron embrace that pressed upon his sides made resistance a folly, and he yielded to his fate in silence. Meantime the startled hobbie, with a vigour all renewed by terror, stretched fleetly along the wild, and reached at length what seemed to Elim to be another valley not far from that in which the temple stood, but populous

and cultivated. That building was no longer to be seen, but the river with a noisier and more broken current, babbled along the borders of many a little garden and many a low peillice. One dwelling in particular, of a larger size than the rest, attracted his attention. It was built of darkened oak, and roofed with skins of wolves and other animals of the forest. It stood on a small but lofty island, formed by the divided stream, and protected on all sides by a barrier of raised earth, bound firmly together with the trunks of felled trees, and surmounted by a kind of rude palisading, interlaced with woodbine and other wandering shrubs. A wooden drawbridge of unhewn timber crossed one arm of the parted water, from the entrance of the Dun to the brink of a small but wild and broken cliff, and was reflected in the darkened stream that flowed more softly underneath the simple fabric. Hither the un-

known companion of his headlong journey directed the steps of Elim's hobbie, renewing his pealing shouts of "Doun Dara go bragh! Coun Crehir a-bo!" and reined up the obedient animal amongst a crowd of people, who received him with exclamations of welcome and surprize. Their hooded cloaks, of the dingy saffron dye of the arbutus, beneath which Elim's eye could sometimes catch a glimpse of the green girdle and the secret skene, gave him to understand that he had fallen into the hands of the same sept, a party of whom he had defeated a few hours before. All warrior as he was, it was with a feeling of anxiety that he found himself a prisoner of the Hooded People.

After addressing a few words to some of the men, in an accent which prevented Elim from distinctly comprehending what they meant, his captor, a man of huge and bony shape, conducted him across the bridge, and into the se-

questered dun. Casting, as he entered, a look of anxiety back to his ill-treated hobbie, he observed that one of the men had flung a cloak over his reeking sides, and was conducting him round the building, as it seemed, to shelter and repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE domestic picture which was revealed to him as he crossed the threshold had no less of novelty for Elim's eyes than the external features of the building. He found himself in a lofty and extensive room, the walls and ceiling of which were decorated with sculpture not inferior to that with which the mountaineers of Norway and Sweden are accustomed at this day to decorate their houses. A large fire of turf and timber burned at one end, near which, on a beechen tripod, sat an old man, his many coloured garments hanging in numerous and not ungraceful folds around his

aged limbs, his grey head slightly drooping, and his beard, which still retained its hardy brown, descending nearly to his girdle. Two or three somewhat less aged figures sat near him, one resting on a sally framed harp, or clarsech, which stood between his knees, the others silently enjoying the warmth which played upon their sunken features, and looking towards the door. A young girl knelt near the feet of the old man first mentioned, cooking some wheaten cakes upon the embers, and a copper cauldron of great size was suspended over the fire. On the opposite side, seated on a tripod somewhat lower than that of the old man, appeared a maiden veiled, with a silver cross, hanging at her waist, and attended by two handmaids, who stood close behind, examining the prisoner's dress and arms with looks of curiosity and wonder. A number of men and women sat or stood on the rushes which

strewed the earthen floor, and hushed their murmuring converse as the stranger entered.

Leaving Elim near the threshold, his captor now advanced toward the old man first described. Throwing back his hood, and taking off his skene and girdle, in token of vassalage, he held for a little time a conversation with the Ard-Draithe (for such had Elim already conjectured the old man to be). He was unable to hear its import, but he could judge by the slightly gathered brows and reproving head-shake of the old man, and by the disappointed aspect of the younger, that the latter had not met with an approving reception. Returning to Elim, with a discontented brow, he conducted him with no gentle grasp to the feet of the Ard-Draithe, and, resuming his hood and girdle, turned sullenly away.

It would be difficult to furnish any idea of the feelings which arose in Elim's breast as he

gazed on the old man, by whose hand, he made no doubt, his father had been deprived of life in the glow of youth and happiness. Mastering his emotions, however, by a powerful effort, he awaited in fixed silence the first word of his host.

The aged Druid, after surveying him for some moments with a look of scrutiny, said :

“Thou art an Ithian ?”

“I am,” said Elim.

“Dost thou know,” continued the Ard-Draithe, “what sept it is into whose hands thou hast fallen ?”

“I have often been taught,” said Elim, “to beware of the Hooded People of the Hills.”

“Thou hast got thy lesson ill then,” said the Ard-Draithe, “to be found journeying through their chief retreat alone, and uninvited. Thou hast the gentle eye of an O’Haedha. Knowest thou what cause we have to love thy race ?”

“Not less, at least,” said Elim, “than we to love the Hooded Men, for any recollected good or evil. A murderer’s sword once left our house without a ruler, and if justice has been defeated of her victim, we may thank thy tribe that sheltered the assassin.

“Thou art as free of thy speech as of thy life,” said the Ard-Draithe, “to bring the name of Conall to my memory. Between their friendship and their enmity, thy tribe has made us suffer grievously. If thou hast so much cause to doubt our sept, why art thou here, through thine own negligence?”

“I came here,” replied Elim, “not by my own knowledge or design, but straying in pursuit of a runaway carrowe, who would have driven our cattle off the lands.”

The Ard-Draithe now was silent for so long a time, that Elim became weary of his situation.

He deemed himself fortunate in the Druid's ignorance of his real rank, but was astonished at the tone and manner in which he spoke of Connall. They were rather those of a person wronged and still unredressed, than of one who had wreaked upon his foe the last vengeance that human hatred can inflict. Desirous of effecting his liberation before the return of the single fugitive should render his chance of impunity more doubtful, he demanded his freedom, reminding the old Druid that the septs were not at war.

“Whatever cause we had,” said the Ard-Draithe, “to blame thy race, that now is past away—and for thy creed, it is true that it has wrought our shame and ruin. The nain is silent in our trilithons—the rod of the Draithe no longer tells where springs the living water—the clouds that move in the air no longer shape their masses into prophetic forms, as they were wont to do

for the instruction of our fathers; and the temple of Bel is profaned by Christian worshippers. He numbers now few votaries in Inisfail, but yet the brazen gen was never drawn to work nor to oppose the change. We have but to thank our own defective brethren that we are few in number and feeble in means."

Elim did not see any use in replying to this speech, with the tone of which he was still more astonished than before, and the Ard-Draithe, after a pause, continued:—

"Nevertheless, I cannot change the laws of Coom-na-Druid. Thou hast broken a decree made public in many a Feis, by which thou wert forbidden to set foot upon our land, on pain of heavy fine. Thou must here remain until thy chieftain sends thine eric. Meantime, be welcome to our board and dance. It is the feast of Sanihuin. This night thou art our guest and not our prisoner."

The first thought of Elim's mind was to reject with scorn and abhorrence the proffered invitation: he felt as if his father's shade were watching his decision. Once more, however, commanding his feelings, in compliance with the necessity of the case, he signified by a low inclination of the head, the acquiescence which he could not speak.

"Thy dog," said the maiden who sat on the other side the fire-place, "was wiser than his master when he refused to pass our valley unrefreshed." So saying, she pointed to the hound, which, unheeded by Elim, had been fawning at his feet during the conversation with the old Druid. Elim patted the animal with a smile, and prepared with hopes, indeed but slightly elevated, to receive with cheerfulness the hospitable attentions of the Druid household. A long table was placed in the middle of the apartment, which was speedily covered with the contents of the

seething cauldron, consisting of forest fowls, pork, beef, and mutton of unusual richness. Some dishes of the shamrock, or wood sorrel, and cresses were interspersed ; and their drink was mead and oel, with a few horns of wine, imported from the Gaulish coasts by merchants who traded here for skins and other articles of commerce.

When the feast had ended, the Ard-Draithe rose, and, in the presence of the hooded circle, extinguished the fire which burned upon the hearth. At the same instant the sounds of harp and bagpipe, heard without, at a distance, seemed to announce the commencement of the festival. The Ard-Draithe, followed by all his household, proceeded towards the door, and, in a short time, Elim was left alone with the young female already mentioned, and her hand-maids, a single galloglach keeping guard outside the door. The thought of disarming the centinel, of flying across

the bridge, and escaping, at any hazard, out of the hands of his present captors, was naturally amongst the first ideas that arose within the mind of Elim : but while he stood indulging it, a voice, at a little distance, said, as if in answer to his thoughts :

“ Thou hadst better not attempt it, for though there be but one at the door, there are twenty at the bridge.”

“ I will take thy counsel,” answered Elim, laughing, “ though they say a woman’s seldom does a soldier service. And who art thou, my kind and fair adviser ?” he added, approaching the young woman, with an air of respect and courtesy. “ A prisoner, doubtless, like myself, but of what name or sept I cannot determine.”

Before the person he addressed had time to return an answer, two figures appeared at the threshold. They were those of Duach, Elim’s captor, and of a strongly made, well-looking woman.

“Well, Banba,” said the maiden, addressing herself to the latter, “is the festival begun?”

“Not yet, Aithne,” was the woman’s answer.

“Samhuin has not arisen,” added Duach.

“If thou wouldst see a splendid sight,” said Aithne, turning to the Ithian, “I can lead thee to a spot from whence thou mayest behold the festival, and thy question shall be answered on the way.”

Elim readily assented, and they left the house, preceded by Duach and Banba, passing through an entrance in the rear of the building, and meeting no opposition from a galloglach who kept guard without. While Elim follows his fair guide, it will be important for us to furnish, in fuller detail than that in which it was communicated to the young Ithian, the story of the maiden, and the manner in which she had obtained permanent footing on the forbidden land.

CHAPTER XV.

CARTHAN, the father of Aithne (as Elim heard her named by Banba), was the brother of the Ard-Draithe, who has long since appeared in our narrative, at the wedding feast of Conall. One of their ancestors was amongst the Druid disputants who were appointed to contend against the Christian teachers at Cruachan. He and his companions were unsuccessful. It was alleged by their opponents, in canvassing the morality of the Druid doctrines, that their chief error (so far as the present welfare of society was concerned,)

lay in the fact that they tended strongly to excite the passions of worldly glory, ambition, and revenge ; and the national character was referred to in proof of this unhappy influence. The hooded chief, however, though defeated, was not convinced, and he returned to the Coom, more strongly prejudiced than ever against the new belief. This feeling was inherited by his successors, and existed in all its force within the mind of the Ard-Draithe who at present governed the sept. It occasioned those exclusive regulations which still prevented all peaceful intercourse with the surrounding territories, and it led also to an unhappy dissension, which, for a long time, separated the Ard-Draithe and his brother. The latter, having embraced the doctrines of the proscribed religion, experienced, in consequence, so much coldness from the Ard-Draithe, that he judged it better to take up his residence elsewhere. Travelling towards

the royal domain of Meath, he was fortunate enough to obtain a confidential post in the household of Niall, the Ard-righ, who, till within the last few years, had occupied the throne of Inisfail. He first attracted the notice of the monarch during the progress of the Aonach, or sports of Tailtean, in Meath (famous for the victory of the three sons of Ith, over the Danaan leaders). These sports, we are told, were instituted by the Ard-righ Lughaidh, the long-handed, in honour of Tailte, a Spanish princess, who had instructed him in his youth. They were still held on the same spot, commencing fourteen days before, and continuing fourteen days after, the first of August, during which time a perfect immunity of person and property was enjoyed by all who attended. They consisted of trials of skill and strength in military exercises, such as the use of the sling, the bow, the javelin, and the battle-

axe ; in chariot racing, mock combats on horse and foot, and many other amusements. It was late in the Aonach, when Carthan, accompanied by Duach, then a boy, arrived upon the plain. Before him stood the church of Tailte, once a Druid temple, and around were amphitheatres, erected for the accommodation of spectators. The monarch of the isle presided at the games, and distributed the rewards. Carthan, who had received the usual education of a chieftain, took part in the games, and acquitted himself sufficiently well to draw the attention, and finally to win the favour, of the monarch. He was received into the palace of Tamrach, where he continued long to hold a post of high trust, and was gradually admitted into the intimate confidence of the Ard-righ. It happened that the Aonach of Tailtean was celebrated for something more than games and exercises. There it

was that alliances between noble families were set on foot, arranged, and brought to pass. There it was that Carthan first met the sister of Airtree, the monarch of Leath Mogha, whose hand he afterwards obtained, as well by his own merit, as by the influence of the Ard-righ, to whom he was as devotedly attached as man can be to man.

Aithne was the first born, and now the only surviving child of this alliance. From her very infancy she was distinguished by the promise of great beauty of person, and a more than feminine strength of mind and feeling. It was not in the common phrase of social flattery that the friends of her parents predicted for their daughter a shining womanhood. Her dispositions, as they were unfolded, presented a character than which, perhaps, none could be imagined more nearly allied to enthusiasm, yet farther from

romance. Serious, no less than graceful, in her tastes, deep and practical in her reflections, warm in her attachments, and rational in all her words and actions, there existed in her whole demeanour a silent steady ardour, that made her very appearance impressive, and a plenitude of mind that made it seem as if every movement had a meaning. Even in youth the studies to which she most adhered were of a grave and useful, rather than amusing kind; and they were for the most part suggested by her affections rather than by an ambitious thirst of knowledge, or mere curiosity of mind. Thus the condition and manners of the Druid septa throughout the kingdom, the history of the isle itself, with all its misery, and all its defects, were subjects with which she was familiarly acquainted, and on which she deeply felt. Her father, who delighted in the genius and understanding of his child, was pleased to observe the

interest which the monarch took in her improvement, and often indulged in visionary anticipations of the future brilliancy of her career.

At thirteen years of age, Aithne was placed at the celebrated convent of Kildoir, for the purpose of completing her education. It was in the close of autumn, when, accompanied by her father, she arrived in that ancient city, made illustrious throughout Europe by the fame of Bridget. Stopping for the night at the house of a Gailian chief, they rose early on the following morn, and were driven toward the magnificent cathedral. They arrived at the convent just as the portress had opened the outer gate, and were admitted without difficulty, along with many females of the city, who came to assist at the morning service of the sisterhood. At first the array of dismal attire cast a chill into the breast of Aithne, and indisposed her to feel the truth of

what she had so often heard, that happiness could dwell in forms so joyless and sepulchral. Even after their admission into the reception room, where the sisters were conversing with their friends, their cheerfulness had for some time a still more depressing effect on Aithne's mind. How it happened that people, shut up for life in these sombre chambers ; obliged to observe a rigid rule of conduct ; surrounded by objects that seemed intended only to keep death continually in their view ; suffered only to sing those solemn strains which she had heard from the choir ; and dressed in garments that seemed better suited for the dead than for the living ; could yet preserve the light of an untroubled gaiety in all their manner, was a mystery that Aithne could not solve ; and the sight dejected and perplexed her. By degrees, however, this reserve gave place to increasing familiarity, and she did not feel the

same alarm when the young scholars pressed around her with courtesies and questions of child-like simplicity and kindness. One offered her fruits from the convent garden; another fastened flowers into her girdle; a third enquired the place of her nativity, and told anecdotes of their convent life, until at length Aithne forgot the cold exterior that had chilled her, and entered freely into their discourse. All seemed interested by her awakened liveliness of mind, no less than by her exceeding beauty of person, and the strangeness of her remarks on what she saw.

Her time was less at her own disposal here than it had been at Tamrach. The number of scholars, who were chiefly the daughters of princes and chieftains in the neighbourhood, was considerable. They occupied a portion of the building, apart from the sisterhood, of whom two or three only were permitted at a

time to mingle with the scholars, for the purposes of giving instruction, preserving order, and enforcing silence, the last, though not, in this instance, the least laborious office. They were instructed in such learning as became their sex ; in music, in singing, in the use of the needle ; and there remain some ancient testimonials, to show that even that of the pencil was not unknown amongst them. But, more than all, they were instructed in those duties of piety, of charity, of modesty, and self-command, which give its highest lustre to the feminine character. Here the natural ardour and intensity of Aithne's disposition received an addition of sweetness that completed its attractions, and made the will to please as apparent as the power.

One of the sisterhood, named Munig, became, from a similarity of mind and tastes, the close and intimate friend of Aithne, so far as was

consistent with the rules of a community in which particular friendships were discouraged. It happened one night that it was her turn to watch beside the perpetual fire of St. Bridget. This emblematical office was a continuation of a very ancient custom. At the time when the country was possessed by the adorers of fire, a Druid grove and temple were standing at Kildoir, on the very spot where now the archiepiscopal cathedral stood. The Senæ, or Druid virgins, here watched in turn beside a sacred fire, which was worshipped as a symbol of the sun. On the conversion of the isle, a vestal fire, like this, was still maintained, though with a different meaning, by the hands of Christian votaries, who aimed not so much at a change of forms as of principles. Having obtained permission to watch beside her friend, Aithne, late at night, glided from the dormitory, and entered the

deserted aisle. She found the former leaning over the orbicular fencework which surrounded the emblematic flame, and lighting it up, whenever it decayed, with an ample fan, which she bore for the purpose in her hand. The light fell around upon the shrines of Conlath and of Bridget, rich with the offerings of many a pilgrim, and on the altar, from whose polished panels, it was said, the boughs had sprouted forth to attest the purity of its virgin foundress. Around the aisle were paintings commemorative of departed saints, the colours of which were scarcely revealed in the dim light that reached them from the distant fire. Aithne had now been many years at Kildoir, and the day of her departure was drawing nigh. The place, the employment, and her speedy departure, naturally suggested the tone of the conversation, and Mu-nig, at the desire of her young friend, repeated,

while she fanned the vestal fire, the following verses of a poem, the production of some nameless bard of a preceding age :

THE ISLE OF SAINTS.

I.

Far, far amid those lonely seas,
Where evening leaves her latest smile,
Where solemn ocean's earliest breeze,
Breathes, peaceful, o'er our holy isle.

II.

Remote from that distracted world,
Where sin has reared his gloomy throne,
With passion's ensign sweetly furl'd,
We live and breathe for heaven alone !

III.

For heaven we hope, for heaven we pray,
For heaven we look, and long to die,
For heaven—for heaven, by night, by day,
Untiring watch, unceasing sigh !

IV.

Here, fann'd by heavenly temper'd winds,
Our island lifts her tranquil breast ;
Oh, come to her, ye wounded minds !
Oh, come and share our holy rest !

v.

For not to hoard the golden spoil,
Of earthly mines we bow the knee—
Our labour is the saintly toil,
Whose hire is in eternity.

vi.

The mountain wild—the islet fair,
The corrig bleak, and lonely vale—
The bawn that feels the summer air,
The peak that splits the wintry gale.

vii.

From northern Ulladh's column'd shore,
To distant Cleir's embosom'd nest ;
From high Benhedir's summit hoar,
To Ara in the lonely west.

viii.

Through all, the same resounding choir
Harmonious pours its descant strong,
All feel the same adoring fire—
All raise the same celestial song.

ix.

When sinks the sun beyond the west,
Our vesper hymn salutes him there ;
And when he wakes the world from rest,
We meet his morning light with prayer.

x.

The hermit by his holy well,
The monk within his cloister grey,
The virgin in her silent cell,
The pilgrim on his votive way.

XI.

To all the same returning light,
The same returning fervour brings,
And thoughtful in the dawning bright,
The spirit spreads her heaven-ward wings.

XII.

From hill to hill, from plain to plain,
Wherever falls his fostering ray ;
Still swells the same aspiring strain,
From angel souls in shapes of clay.

XIII.

The echoes of the tranquil lake,
The clifted ocean's cavern'd maze,
The same untiring music make,
The same eternal sound of praise.

XIV.

Oh, come, and see our Isle of Saints,
Ye weary of the ways of strife ;
Where oft the breath of discord taints
The banquet sweets of joyous life.

XV.

Ye weary of the lingering woes
That crowd on Passion's footsteps, pale,
Oh, come and taste the sweet repose
That breathes in distant Inisfail.

XVI.

Not ours the zeal for pomp—for power—
The boastful threat—the bearing vain—
The mailed host—the haughty tower—
The pomp of war's encumbered plain.

XVII.

Our strifes are in the holy walk
Of love serene and all sincere ;
Our converse is the soothing talk
Of souls that feel like strangers here.

XVIII.

Our armies are the peaceful bands
Of saints and sages mustering nigh ;
Our towers are raised by pious hands
To point the wanderer's thoughts on high.

XIX.

The fleeting joys of selfish earth
We learn to shun with holy scorn ;
They cannot quench the inward dearth
With man's immortal spirit born.

XX.

Yet while my heart within me burns,
To hear that still resounding choir ;
To days unborn it fondly turns :—
When dies that heaven-descended fire ?

XXI.

How long shalt thou be thus divine,
Fair isle of piety and song ?
How long shall peace and love be thine,
Oh, land of peace—how long ? how long ?

XXII.

Hark ! echoing from each sainted tomb
Prophetic voices sternly roll—
They wrap my thoughts in sudden gloom,
Their accents freeze my shuddering soul.

XXIII.

Ha ! say ye that triumphant hell
Shall riot in these holy grounds ?
Shield ! shield me from those visions fell,
Oh, silent be those fearful sounds !

XXIV.

They tell of crime, of contest sharp,
Of force and fraud, and hate and wrong—
No more, no more, my venturous harp,
Oh, trembling close thine altered song.

XXV.

Oh, let thy thoughtful numbers cease,
Ere yet the touch of phrenzy taints
The land of love and letter'd peace,
The Isle of Sages and of Saints.

Their conversation was interrupted by the expiration of Munig's watch. Soon after, a circumstance occurred which deepened on the mind of Aithne the impression made by reading the sanguinary and mournful annals of her native isle. A relative of Munig, who was Righ, or King, of

Gailian, was slain in battle with a neighbouring chief, and interred near the ancient cemetery of Roilich-na-riogh, or the Grave of the Kings. It was necessary that the former should be present at the scene of the funeral ceremonies, and Aithne obtained permission to accompany her friend. It was with feelings of veneration, allied to the sublime, that the young princess approached the spot which contained the dust of her country's kings, and on which, in fancy, she had often dwelt. The last portion of the funeral journey was performed by water, and as the day was calm, the river smooth, and the boats numerous, the sight was interesting and impressive. Aithne and Munig sat in a currach not far from that which bore the body of the king. About noon, on a hot summer day, the celebrated resting-place of the kings of Inisfail appeared in sight. The banks of the river were crowded with spectators,

and a mournful strain arose as the foremost vessels touched upon the shore. Before them lay a plain, on which stood several buildings, connected with each other by long, low roofed halls. One of these was pointed out to Aithne as containing the crypt in which the remains of a long train of Druid kings were laid. Another had been since erected, for their Christian successors. The other buildings were religious edifices of various kinds. The funeral ceremonies being ended, the friends were received into a female monastery on the spot, which was to afford them shelter and refreshment during their stay.

At midnight, Aithne was awakened from a deep sleep, and a dream of crowns and tombs, by her companion Munig, who bade her rise and follow her with despatch. The daughter of Carthan hastened to comply, and accompanied

her friend through a long passage leading to the cloisters, from which again another passage conducted them to the narrow opening of what seemed a subterranean crypt. Here they were received by one of the sisterhood, who admitted them to the recess. Descending, by the light of a lamp, which Munig carried in her hand, a flight of granite steps, the latter suddenly turned to her friend, and said, with a smile :

“Thou hast thy wish at length. We are in the sepulchre of kings.”

Aithne gazed around her with interest of the intensest kind. The apartment was occupied by monuments ranged on each side, and extending to a length that seemed interminable. Over each tomb appeared the sculptured bust of the perished occupant, and a lamp, suspended from above, gave light to the cold and marble features. The astronomer, who for the first time beholds in

his reflector the storied wonders of the heavens made evident to the sight, or the classic enthusiast, who gazes for the first time upon the remnants of the Parthenon, or the Acropolis, may imagine something of the feeling with which Aithne paced from tomb to tomb, and contemplated the chiselled features of the monarchs, whose names and actions had long been made familiar to her mind, by the annals of her country. Here lay the mouldering monument of the Grecian Phartolan, the earliest colonist of Inisfail. The next was that of his successor Neimhidh, whose architectural taste the Fomhairaigh of Tor Conuing had so much reason to remember. Here Aithne paused at the monument of Slainge, the first who ever bore the title of Ard-righ, and here she gazed upon the silver hand, which had gained the crown for Nuadh, and which was now suspended at his tomb. She passed successively

the sepulchres of Lugha, the Long-Armed, the celebrated institutor of the sports of Tailtean, and the first who taught the islanders to fight on horseback ; of the three sons of Cearmada, who introduced the idol worship of the sun, the plough share, and a log of wood ; of Irial, the prophet, whose reign was glorious in peace, as well as war ; of Tighermas, his descendant, who made the famous law of Ilbreachta, distinguishing the classes of the isle by the number of hues in their attire, and whose terrific end still formed the evening legend of the kerne of Breifne ; of Eochaidh of the Green Edge, in whose reign the art of dying weapon blades was first discovered, and whose own swords and javelins bore the hue which suggested his surname ; of Fiacha, whose government was distinguished by the bursting up of Lough Erne, upon the plains of Maigh Geaneim ; of his son, called Mumho, from his

powerful strength, and from whom the various kingdoms of Muimhean* derived their common name; of Eadhna, who first caused shields and targets, of pure silver, to be fabricated at Airgidross, which it was his custom to bestow on the most deserving of his soldiers; and of Muimheamhoin, the institutor of the regal order of the golden chain, who, going a step in splendour beyond his predecessor, had armour made and ornamented with pure and ductile gold. A monument of unusual magnificence next met the eyes of Aithne. It was that of Eochaidh the Ollamh Fodhla, who first established the triennial Feis of Tamrach, and who still continues to be the Kaliph Haroun Alraschid of the romance of ethnic Inisfail. Next appeared the tombs of Rotheachta, in whose days the carbudh, or chariot, both for war and peace, was introduced

* Afterwards Thomond, Desmond, Ormond, &c.

into the isle ; of Art Imlioch, or the Pond-Girt, so named from having taught his subjects the use of the moat and drawbridge, and the construction of the fortification called a Dun ; of Seadhna Jonnaruidh, or the Stipendiary, famous for being the first who paid his soldiers in money, clothes, and food, and for a written code of military laws and discipline ; of Eadhna the Red, who first caused money to be coined at Airgidross ; of Eochaidh Uarcheas (of the Baskets), so named from his invention of wicker canoes, in which he made descents on stormy coasts ; of Macha, the female usurper, who, in spite of the salique law of Inisfail, kept forcible possession of her husband's throne, and founded the famous palace of Eamhuin, where now the city of Ardmacha stood ; of Jughaine the Great, who divided the island into its five and twenty portions ; of Roigne, his son, the author

of a code of laws; of Maon, who taught the people of Gailian to use the *laighean*, or Gaulish spear, from which their territory afterwards derived its name;* of Eochaidh the Sorrowful, who divided the kingdom into its five great provinces; of his successor, of the same name, who was called Aremh (of the Grave), from his regulating the modes of interment, and who reformed the abuses, and reduced the number, of the bards; of Fearaidhach, whose reign was adorned by the counsels of Moran, the Aristides of Irish history; of Tuathal, the Desired, the institutor of the unhappy Boroimhe Laighean, or Leinster tribute, which, for a long period, made a fatal addition to the causes of disunion, already too numerous, in the constitution of the state; of Feidhlimidh, the lawgiver, who reformed the genius of the national code, by substituting the

* Coige Laighean, the Province of Spears, now Leinster.

lex talionis, for the law of eric, or amercement ; of Con, of the hundred fights, in whose days was made the great partition, which divided the isle into the kingdoms of Leath Mogha, and Leath Cuin ; and of many another sovereign, whose names are not so closely interwoven with the progress of the isle in the arts of war and peace. They came at length to the monument of Lughaidh, the last of the ethnic monarchs of the isle, and Aithne found that she had at the same time reached once more the flight of steps by which they had descended. She turned, as she placed her foot on the ascent, to gaze on the double line of sepulchres that extended far behind, and left the place in company with her friend.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOON after her return to Kildoir, her father came to take her from the convent. She was received at Tamrach by her friends with joy, and by the Ardrigh with undiminished kindness. Her extreme beauty, her dignity of mind and person, her liveliness of manner, and her accomplishments, soon rendered her the attraction of the festivals of Tamrach, and the theme of discourse amongst surrounding princes. Aithne had many suitors, but none that met her own inclinations, or even her father's wishes. Meantime, she

led a cheerful life at the Kempe of Tamrach, making all around her happy by her talents, her piety, and a fervent generosity of disposition.

The visions which Carthan often indulged, with respect to her future fortunes, were sorely shaken by an unexpected step of the Ard-righ himself. One day the latter called him into his private chamber for the purpose of dictating an oraïun. Carthan entered, with the keenest interest, for his attention had long been excited by something unusual, yet almost imperceptible, in the conduct of the Ard-righ. Full of learning, full of wisdom, full of kindness for his people, and of care for their welfare, perhaps there seldom was a monarch better calculated to fill a throne with safety and advantage to the state. He was distinguished in assemblies by his eloquence; in society by his wit; in war by valour and good tact; and in peace by a wise and mo-

derate government. While Carthan was seated, waiting his commands, the king paced to and fro in a thoughtful manner, as if something pressed upon his mind. At length he said :

“I am not as merry, Carthan, as I used to be.”

The confidant admitted that he had long observed a change in his demeanour.

“I have no cause to be otherwise,” said the Ard-righ, “if power and wealth, and the ready obedience of a willing people can make a monarch happy. But the truth is, Carthan, my mind has been occupied by a serious question. I am about to resign the throne of Inisfail.”

Carthan, in astonishment, let the tablet fall, and gazed upon his master. The monarch smiled, but repeated what he had said ; adding that he had resolved on putting his purpose into effect at the approaching Feis of Tamrach. His

intention was, he said, to retire to the lonely island of Huy, or Iona,* and there conclude his life in the monastic habit. Carthan, kneeling at his feet, with tears besought him to relinquish his intention. He represented to him the danger of exchanging, at so advanced a period in life, the habits of active commerce with men, and the engrossing cares of government, for duties of so secluded and so arduous a character ; he reminded him of the austerity of the rule which was observed within the monastery of Columba, so formidable, even to the young and vigorous, not to speak of one whose whole life had been spent in the ease and splendour of a court. Not perceiving that he made any impression on the Ard-righ, he at length conjured him to consider the interests of his people, and not, by withdrawing from them his talents, his influence, and his

* Y-colm-kill, near Mull.

experience, sacrifice their welfare to the comparatively selfish purpose of securing his own religious safety. He urged him, with all the earnestness he could command, to subdue this late desire of solitude, and be true to the ties of affection, of friendship, and of genuine charity.

“Thou wilt see, on reflection,” said the monarch, after listening with great attention to Carthan’s arguments, “that every reason thou hast urged against my purpose, and many far more powerful, must have long since suggested themselves to my own mind. To those which relate to my own welfare, I have no answer to make, except to thank thee for thy love. As to my people, I have taken care they shall not suffer by my resignation. Donacha, the Roy-damna,* has almost my years, more than my experience

* Heir to the Ard-righ.

in affairs of state, and his wisdom, learning, and integrity are well known. For the rest, whether here or at Iona, I will never forget my friends."

Seeing the uselessness of debate, the favourite retired to his apartment penetrated with the deepest concern at what he had heard. The Ard-righ persevered in his resolution, and resigned his crown at the next Feis of the nation. Carthan staid to witness the ceremony, which, though not unprecedented, was yet sufficiently unusual to excite considerable interest and surprize. The monarch came to the Feis arrayed in all the regal splendour, and attended by the pomp, of Tamrach; and, in a few days after, departed in a solitary fishing vessel for the lonely isle which was to be the scene of his voluntary banishment. Carthan, resisting the instances of Donacha, who urged him to continue at Tamrach, took up his residence at the court of Airtree, in the city of

Luimneach, where he remained until the death of his wife. After this event, nothing could induce him to remain within the kingdom, or to retain the slightest portion of the possessions which she had brought him. He arrived one evening, worn with travel and affliction, accompanied by his only child, in the valley of her ancestors, which, till then, Aithne never had beheld. The Ard-Draithe's heart was not proof to the sight of his brother returning in sorrow, after years of absence. He received him with forgiving affection, and re-instated him in his small inheritance. Here he lived for two years, overcoming, by his way of life, the bitterness of prejudice which his change of faith had raised against him in his tribe. Dying at length, he commended his orphan child into the hands of the Ard-Draithe, entreating for her his protection, which was readily granted. The gentleness of

Aithne's character soon made her generally loved, while her complying and affectionate disposition endeared her so much to the old Ard-Draithe, Conraoi, that many supposed an union between her and his heir, Tuathal, would be the result. The more judicious, however, saw in the character of the latter an effectual bar to this arrangement.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE reader may conjecture how much of the foregoing narrative was communicated by its heroine to Elin, while they followed Duach and his wife, through a narrow and stony glen leading to that portion of the Coom na Druid which Elin had first seen. The night was bright and starlit, although the shadows of the surrounding mountains prevented their discerning, with any distinctness, what was passing in the vale. Seated on the rocks which lay around, they waited the moment when the gaieties of the annual festival were to

commence. Elim was delighted with the manner in which Aithne communicated all that she could of the events just related.

“And now, good Ithian,” she said, as they were seated, “thou shalt presently witness some specimen of the manners of the valley. There is not now a spark of fire in all the territories of the Hooded people.”

Elim looked down and beheld, in the dim light, a multitude of people thronging the shores of the lake, the strip of land already mentioned, and the isle on which the temple stood. The deepest silence prevailed, as if all were hushed in expectation of some portentous event, and although the moon had not yet arisen, the cloudless sky around was all illumined with her light.

Suddenly a deep murmur, like the beat of waves upon the shore, arose from the assembled

people ; and Elim, looking toward the summit of the mountains, beheld the golden rim of the full harvest moon appearing slowly in the heavens. The burst of a thousand voices and a thousand instruments ascended from the valley. The multitude, with renewed murmurs of devotion, prostrated themselves upon the earth, while the goddess of the night arose, and looked on her adorers. At the same instant the islet was illumined by a fire which was suddenly kindled near the temple, and around which Elim now could faintly distinguish the gorgeous dresses of the Ard-Draithe and his principal assistants. Soon after, burning brands were distributed to the people, with which they were to re-illuminate their own hearth-fires, not again to be extinguished before the festival of Bel. The sight of the numerous torches, hurrying along the shore and up the heights, in various directions,

appeared to Elim not the least interesting part of the ceremony.

Returning to the Dun, Elim renewed his conversation with the Ard-Draithe's niece, while they waited his return. Aithne, who appeared perfectly acquainted with the history and present condition of the sept of O'Haedha, made so many enquiries respecting the young chieftain, and spoke so warmly in his praise, that Elim's countenance was sometimes near betraying him.

“And here, in this lone retreat, after the splendours of Tamrach, thou dwellest content, and quite companionless?” said Elim.

“Not quite,” answered Aithne. “Tuathal gives me a great deal of his company, and not a little of his conversation. I am sorry he is not here to lecture thee on caths, and gens, and skiaghhs, and other warlike affairs. He could prove to thee, beyond question, that our Dun is

fortified according to the precise rules laid down by the renowned Art Imlioch, or the Pond Girt, that great monarch who first taught the children of Inisfail to raise breast-works of earth and stone, and to construct the moat and drawbridge. Art Imlioch and Jonnaruidh, the first who ever wrote a book on tactics, are the constant subjects of Tuathal's eulogy, as Coun Crehir, and Doun Dara are the admiration of Duach. He left the Coom at day break, on an excursion of the chase, and has not since returned. He was expected to take a part at the festival, and, before thy coming, his absence had already begun to make the Ard-Draithe anxious."

Elim, on hearing this, was silent for some time, and then said :

" Did thy young friend wear a canabhas with a purple hood ? "

Aithne replied in the affirmative, and her

answer struck Elim mute for a few seconds. He had no doubt it was the fugitive whom he pursued. The only way he could account for his not having reached the Dun before, was, by supposing (what was in truth the case) that he had concealed himself from the pursuit, in some secret pass, and was fearful of venturing out again until the danger had completely passed away. The necessity of immediately taking measures for his safety was evident, and he thought it best to throw himself on Aithne's generosity. Relating what had taken place, yet without revealing his rank, he so impressed her with the truth of his statement, and the wantonness of Tuathal's outrage, that she consented to favour his escape, though the event alarmed and distressed her.

The sun was now descending fast, and the sound of the distant citola and piobh mala had ceased for some time to remind them of the pro-

ceedings at the temple. On a sudden, while both continued silent, the distant concert was renewed with a louder burst of harmony than ever. The music approached more near, and in a short time the Ard-Draithe re-appeared, attired in robes of white, and bearing in his hand a blazing brand, which he cast upon the blackened hearth. The fire was lighted up anew; and now the house was thronged with the inhabitants of the valley, who pressed forward, with a stunning clamour of laughter and of voice, to enter on the amusements of the evening.

In the midst of all this festive tumult, and while the Ard-Draithe stood near the fire, commanding peace, and endeavouring to restore order, he was astonished to see Aithne suddenly advance and kneel at his feet. All was hushed in an instant. The old Druid raised his hands in astonishment, those who were approaching the

fire stopped short, and those who were at a distance looked back, to see the occasion of the sudden silence.

“ Well, Aithne,” said the Druid, “ what wouldst thou have, my child? What must I give thee now?”

Aithne was silent for a moment.

“ First grant it, father—and then I will tell thee what it is.”

“ I freely do,” replied the Ard-Draithe—
“ I may grant any thing that Aithne asks. And now what is it thou hast gained of me?”

Aithne pressed her hands and forehead on his feet, and then said, looking up, with kindling features :

“ The freedom of the Ithian prisoner”

“ Thou hast thy will,” said the Ard-Draithe. “ It is a little thing to grant thee, what I had almost determined on before hand. Our

kern, Duach," he added, turning to Elim, who stood viewing his intercessor with silent gratitude, "has punished thee enough by his needless violence. Thou art free, Christian, to return to thy people, but though we break the chains of force, we would gladly bind thee longer amongst us, by those of kindness. Remain to night and share our festival: we will not ask thee to partake in rites which thou abhorrest, but only to join our mirth. Young ears love music, and young limbs the dance, and thou wilt never be the less an Ithian for making merry with the Hooded People."

"I am grateful to thee and to thy kinswoman," said Elim, "but I would gladly reach Rath-Aidan before morn. My kinsmen must suppose me slain,—and I have a mother at home who will pass a sleepless night if I stay dancing here."

“ A daltin can be sent to quiet her mind,” said the Ard-Draithe.

“ I beseech thee press me not,” continued Elim, “ what thou hast given, give wholly.”

“ Be it as thou wilt,” said the Ard-Draithe, “ only at least thou must not pass the Druid’s threshold without once more sharing his cake and mead.”

With renewed anxiety, Elim saw himself compelled to await the termination of the concert and dance which were already in preparation, at the eminent risk of being surprised by the fugitive Tuathal before he should depart.

“ Thou canst not help thyself,” said Aithne, in a low tone, as she passed him, “ I have saved thy head for thee, and thou must now take care of it as thou canst. If Tuathal arrive, avoid him as well as thou art able, until thou canst thrird thy way to the other side of the bridge, and then—

remember to deal as generously as thy power may enable thee by thy prisoners."

"I will not forget thy wishes, nor thy kindness," answered Elim. "If I did, my head were hardly worth thy intercession."

So saying, and forcibly dismissing his care, he prepared to enter with a cordial spirit into the mirth of the assembly. The apartment was now filled with dresses of a richer sort; torches, composed of twisted rushes steeped in oil, were lighted along the walls, and a burst of harmony proceeded from the band of crotaries, composed of all but the wind instruments, which were then esteemed too rude for in-door concerts. Elim found the harpers no way inferior in skill to those of his own sept, although their music was of a somewhat obsolete air, and their poetry, for the most part, far more agreeable in style than sentiment.

“ But what mode of warfare is this which has been adopted by my conqueror ?” asked Elim, as he led Aithne to her tripod near the fire-place, and sat on the rushes at her feet. “ I am sure there is nothing like it in the book of Jonnaruidh. It was more like the spring of a wild cat, than the onset of a well-reared soldier.”

In answer to this remark, Aithne informed him, that Duach had been, from his boyhood, the attached and faithful follower of her deceased father, and since his death, a devoted servant to herself. He had been, in childhood, remarkable for a placability of temper, that was even unusual amongst the wild kerne of the hills, until, at the period when he was rising into youth, a travelling Fochlucan, one of those persons who obtained a livelihood by story-telling, arrived at her father's residence. In the course of the evening, being called on to entertain the company with

some of his professional lore, he related with great emphasis and gesticulation, the famous narrative of the Catha Fiontreagha, or battle of Ventry Harbour, fought in the days of yore between Dara Doun Mac Laskien Loumlunig, monarch of the world, and Fion Mac Comhal, with his Irish legion. The resounding effect of the heroes' names, and the terrible description held out of the havoc committed during a battle which lasted for three hundred and sixty-six days, took hold, like a contagion, of the mind of Duach, and transformed him from a peaceful and merry daltin, into one of the most redoubted kerne in her father's service. He exchanged his ashen sheep-hook, for a skene and javelin, and his saffron tunic, or cota, for the frieze mantle of the warrior. From that time to the present, there was scarce a moment in which he was not heard uttering the names of Goul MacDravan, Rolust Goul,

Moungand Muncusker Mac Dounha, or some other of the thunder-sounding epithets, which were so remarkable in that tale of blood, and which he seemed to feel a satisfaction in mouthing forth with all their depth of sound. This turn of character was fitted, as he entered into manhood (which took place while Aithne was yet a child), with a person almost gigantic, though lean and muscular; and with eyes that seemed to burn in his head, whenever the ruling passion was aroused within him.

“Nevertheless,” said Aithne, “since he has become attached to the Ard-Draithe, he has involved him in so many difficulties with surrounding princes, by various acts of hostility offered without law, or warrant of his master, that, but for his devoted affection for me, I believe he would esteem himself more a loser than a gainer by his services. You are not the first prisoner

with whose presence, in times of the profoundest peace, he has surprised the tranquil inmates of the Dun."

Aithne continued to converse with the young Ithian, pointing out to him the different characters by which the Dun was crowded relating anecdotes of their daily life, and displaying in the whole a disposition so affectionate, and a mind so gifted, that Elim grieved, whenever she ceased speaking. He felt his spirits sink with a blank and lonesome sensation, when he remembered, that as this was the first, it should probably be the last, night of their acquaintance, and that he was now listening, perhaps for the last time, to the voice which had pleaded, unsolicited, for his freedom.

"The different dresses which you see," said Aithne, "distinguish, according to an ancient Druidical sumptuary law, the different ranks of

the wearers. The old man in white, who leans on the sally-framed clarsech, is Irial, the principal crotarie, or chief harper, of the entire sept. Next him, almost of equal years, sits Cormoc, the chief bard, whose duty it is to follow his master to the field, to sing his deeds at the banquet, and to preserve, in verse, the records of his sept. I confess to you, though I inherit but little of the enthusiasm of my race for their departed privileges, there are times in which his songs have made my veins thrill, until I fancied myself a Druidess ; and almost forced me to weep for the lost glories of the sun-adorers, as if the change had been an evil."

"And who are those," asked Elim, "the old man in green, and the younger in saffron, who sit at a little distance from the old filea?"

"The first," answered Aithne, "is Eogan Bel, our story teller, and the foster father of

Tuathal ; having purchased that dignity from his parent, Eira, the Ard-Draithe's sister, by a present of fifty choice kine. The younger man is his son Eimher, the best slinger and archer in the Coom, and both remarkable for excessive superstition ; a foible from which indeed Tuathal is not free. He would not eat an odd number of eggs this morning, lest his horse should fail him in the expedition, nor would he suffer his daltin to swallow one for the same prudent reason. As to Eogan Bel, his house, which lies somewhat farther up the Coom, is an absolute den of superstition ; an actually frightful specimen of what the human mind is capable of, when it lets conjecture take the place of truth."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ELIM, who became every instant more enchanted with his new acquaintance, soon after received from the latter an account of the manner in which her ancient sept had become possessed of this lone and singular retreat.

“It is many centuries,” said Aithne, “since Cormoc, the Ard-righ of Inisfail, pitched his camp at Drum Dahbaire, against Fiacha, Righ of Dheas Muimhean, in order to enforce some tribute, on pretence of injury received from the latter. Cormoc, having cut off his enemy’s sup-

plies, a great drought ensued, occasioned, as the followers of Fiacha believed, by the spells of Cormoc's Druids. Gloom and dismay prevailed through the camp of Fiacha, and the issue would have been fatal to his cause, if accident had not brought to his assistance an unexpected succour. Our ancestor, Modharuith, the most famous draithe in the kingdom of Ciar, arrived at his camp, and by means of a white wand, which had the power of indicating hidden springs, supplied the army of Fiacha with abundance of water in their camp. The troops, relieved of their thirst and of their fears, gave battle to the Ard-righ, and compelled him to retire to Ossruidhe, where he was obliged to capitulate, promising to make good to the King of Muimheán the loss sustained by his invasion; giving noble hostages, and renouncing for himself and his successors, all claim of chiefrie over any part of Leath Mogha. For

this service Modharuith was rewarded with extensive possessions in Corca Luighe, of which this valley is now the only portion left to his posterity. I confess to thee, Ithian, though I mourn, deeply mourn, the fallen honour of my race, I could well behold them still more straightened in power, provided their depression could contribute, in any degree, to promote union and goodwill amongst the bickering children of our common country. I know, woman though I am, I know how this will end. The hand of the Dal Gas will be raised against the Eoganacht, Ulladh will make war on Meath, and Claire on Conacht, the spirit of dissension will divide our princes, from the Ard-righ of Erin to the poorest chieftain of a distant township; some foreign foe will take advantage of their discord, and Erin never—never more will know what freedom is.”

Elim, who listened with absorbed attention,

was surprised, and penetrated by the depth of feeling with which Aithne spoke these last words. He gazed on her with interest of a new and deeper kind, and as he observed with delight and admiration the heightened colour of her cheek, and the moistened brilliancy of her glance, it seemed to him as if, in the instant, her countenance and character had wholly changed into something loftier and nobler, if not more winning than before.

“Thou art an enthusiast, Aithne,” said the young chieftain, with a warm smile.

“Say not so,” answered Aithne, at once resuming her light and cheerful manner, “I do not sigh for things impossible. I have been taught to love peace ; and, as I love my country, I wish she could enjoy it : that is all.”

In the meantime the festivities of the evening proceeded with increasing zest. The senachie

told his story ; the minstrel sung his song ; the brehoun and the tiarna (or chief of a district) discussed the several laws of south, assault, mustrowne, bode, garty, &c. ; the young people chatted and laughed in groups ; the cro-taries played their liveliest airs ; and, altogether, the variety of dresses, the sprightliness of the music, and the cheerful countenances of the assembly, gave it such an exhilarating effect as somewhat relieved the want of refinement in some of its features.

Late in the evening, an open space was cleared in the midst ; the guests half lay, half sat, round the walls on beds of rushes freshly gathered ; while the Ard-Draithe, to the great mortification of the Ithian, led his niece away to a kind of canopied recess, completely framed in with flowers and foliage, and placed before the open entrance ; so that those who crowded without to look in upon

their ruler, might gratify their hearts without obstruction.

Soon after came the favourite national dance, the name of which alone is frequent now in the minds of Irish villagers. Elim, who felt pain at being separated from Aithne, took advantage of this circumstance to renew the conversation, and, gracefully presenting a white kerchief, led her to the dance. The harp, the bell, the cymbal, and the drum, once more resounded beneath the practised fingers of the crotaries. At first to a slow and peaceful movement, three maidens, all in white, advanced abreast, each chained to each by a white kerchief held between. Pair after pair, of ouths and maids, (amongst whom came first the Ithian and his partner,) in similar attire, came after at an equal pace, as many as the building could accommodate. The three in front having advanced to the recess which held the Ard-Draithe,

did graceful homage to their superior, by laying each her girdle at his feet. Resuming instantly their former attitude, the band on a sudden changed to a rapid measure. The three maidens, standing far apart, held up the kerchiefs so as to form two arches, through which the dancers passed successively, did homage in like manner to the *Ard-Draithe*; wheeled round in rapid semicircles, interspersed with movements of agility and grace, giving place without delay to those who followed, and falling modestly behind into their former places. As the dancers retired, and the music ceased to play, a murmur of approbation arose from the surrounding circle.

Taking his seat once more on the rushes near the feet of *Aithne*, *Elim* was about to offer some observation on the entertainment which had just concluded, when he was cut short in his speech by an exquisitely affecting prelude from the clar-

sech of the principal crotarie of the Ard-Draithe. A dead silence sunk upon the circle, and Aithne informed him in a whisper that this was the greatest musician of the tribe, that he had been educated for seven years at a Druidical college near Ross Ailithri, and was esteemed by all a wonder of musical proficiency. He was about to be accompanied by the filea, or poet, in an extempore poem, the two offices being quite distinct amongst the Druids, and the sudden silence proceeded from the high raised expectations of the assembly, whom either seldom failed to enchant, but whom both together could excite and move almost to any enterprise. The delicious tenderness of the prelude, and the richly modulated accents of the singer, made the tears start into Elim's eyes in spite of him, and it was with a thrill of delight and surprise that he heard his own name mingled in the melody :

I.

Cead millia falta ! child of the Ithian !

Cead millia falta, Elim !

Uisneach, thy temple in ruins is lying,
In Druim na Druid the dark blast is sighing,
Lonely we shelter in grief and in danger,
Yet have we welcome and cheer for the stranger.

Cead millia falta, child of the Ithian !

Cead millia falta, Elim !

II.

Woe for the weapons that guarded our slumbers !
Tamrach, they said, was too small for our numbers ;
Little is left for our sons to inherit,
Yet what we have, thou art welcome to share it.

Cead millia falta, child of the Ithian !

Cead millia falta, Elim !

III.

Corman, thy teachers have died broken hearted ;
Voice of the trilithon, thou art departed !
All have forsaken our mountains so dreary ;
All but the spirit that welcomes the weary.

Cead millia falta, child of the Ithian !

Cead millia falta, Elim !

IV.

Vainly the Draithe, alone in the mountain,
Looks to the torn cloud, or eddying fountain ;
The spell of the Christian has vanquished their power,
Yet is he welcome to rest in our bower.

Cead millia falta, child of the Ithian !

Cead millia falta, Elim !

v.

Wake for the Christian—your welcoming numbers !

Strew the dry rushes to pillow his slumbers,

Long let him cherish, with deep recollection,

The eve of our feast, and the Druid's affection.

Cead millia falta, child of the Ithian !

Cead millia falta, Elim !

While a murmur of admiration and delight ran through the circle, Elim advanced, and at the hazard of discovering his rank, removed from his breast the golden clasp which bound his bright green mantle, and divided it between the minstrels.

On returning to his place, he perceived the Ard-Draithe pressing Aithne to some measure which she seemed to decline with a bashful mixture of laughter and coyness. The mystery was explained, when one of the maidens already mentioned placed a cruit in the hands of her young mistress. The latter complying at length with the wishes of her aged protector, though with a degree of embarrassment that almost amounted to

agitation, ran a rapid prelude in a style that showed Elim she was a perfect mistress of the instrument. Recovering ease and self-possession as she felt the music flow beneath her fingers, she sung in a voice wild, indeed, and unmodulated as the strain of the song-thrush, but sweet and thrillingly distinct in every emphasis, the following verses in the words of her native tongue. As the song proceeded, all other sounds were hushed to a midnight stillness, and the voice of the singer filled the extensive chamber, till it seemed to be echoed from the roof and sculptured walls :

I.

No, not for the glories of days that are flown,
For the fall of a splendour that was but our own ;
No, not for the dust of our heroes that sleep,
Should the bard of the Coom in his melody weep.

II.

For the thought of that glory remains in each breast,
Though we see them no longer, the dead are at rest ;
And gay is the face of the Druid's lone vale,
But dark is the bosom of wide Inisfail !

III.

The demon of discord has breathed on the land,
And her sons on her mountains meet hand against hand,
The children who thought for her welfare are slain,
And her bosom is trampled by those who remain !

IV.

Wild blast of the trompa ! that echoing far,
Hast summoned Leath Mogha with Cuin to war,
Far westward of Ara die over the main,
And never be heard in our vallies again.

V.

Arise on our mountains, O spirit of peace !
Let the sons of the Riada hear thee and cease ;
Too late for their country, oh, let them not prove,
That the strength of the island is union and love !

VI.

Oh, spread not thy strife-quelling pinions aloft,
Till the calm on our country fall sunny and soft ;
From Rechrin's cold islet and Ulladh the green,
To woody Glengariff and fair Inbhersceine.

The exquisite voice of the fair minstrel, and the intense fullness of feeling with which she poured forth her musical appeal, produced an effect on the assembly which, perhaps, a far more accomplished vocalist might have attempted in

vain. The warriors, of whom there were few in the island undeserving of the reproach, looked downward, as if in shame; the tioseach lowered his sword, as if to conceal it; the kern drew his cota involuntarily over his skene; and Elim gazed on the beautiful figure of the minstrel, as if she were herself the spirit she had invoked in fancy, a being sent by the genius of her country to exhort her sons to concord and to peace.

The time was now arrived, however, when this evening, so new in the life of Elim, so full of events, and which he already felt was destined strongly to influence the course of his future fortunes, must draw to a close. He had, indeed, totally forgotten the nature of his situation, and would never have thought of the necessity of departure; but Aithne, who perceived his abstraction, took an opportunity of directing his attention to the moonlight which glimmered upon the

waters of the river, at no great distance from the entrance of the Dun, reminding him at the same time that Tuathal must soon arrive. Elim assented, with reluctance, to her repeated instances, and rose to bid the Ard-Draithe and his friends farewell.

“Fill up the parting cup,” said the Ard-Draithe, “and hand it to the Ithian. Stranger,” he continued, “it is now a score of years since these old arms took up the gen against thy race, on behalf of him whom I believed their injured chief. Whether his cause were good or ill, it is not now worth while to wake the question. Thy sept have well preserved the peace they gave, and were they all like thee, thus frank, thus cordial and ready-handed, I could rejoice to know them closer friends. Here comes the cup—Aithne, do honour to the stranger’s parting draught.”

Aithne, who seemed to think the conference somewhat long, took the golden vessel in silence from the hand of the dark-haired daltin, touched the brim with her lips, and returned it to the attendant, by whom again it was presented to the Ithian chief. Elim paused a moment to remove the green birrede from his bright and curling hair, after which he said :—

“I drink to the forgetfulness of useless strife, and to the memory of present kindness. And thou, too, gentle maiden, to whom I owe a freedom that thou hast taught me how to value, I give thee all good wishes in the draught.”

So saying, he drained the vessel of its contents, and was preparing to depart, amid murmurs of kindness and regard from the whole assembly, when, with a sudden bound, Duach sprung into the midst, wheeling his short javelin, and exclaiming aloud :—

“Tuathal a-bo!”

“He is somewhat late,” said the Ard-Draithe, with displeasure. “It is to be hoped he has brought some precious game that can excuse his absence. If my conjecture prove correct, and that Tuathal in these excursions has other game in view than the wolf and the red deer, it is time for him to look to his inheritance.”

Scarcely was this speech concluded, when a loud cry of women was heard at the bridge without, mingled with the voice of a man in seeming exultation. The Ard-Draithe rose hastily, and general confusion appeared in the countenances of the guests.

“It is Tuathal’s voice,” said he; “his horses’ hoofs sound lonely on the bridge. Some disaster has befallen our friends.”

Aithne darted a warning glance at Elim, who

had scarcely retired amongst the crowd, when the fugitive made his appearance at the doorway, his brazen sword still bare, and his dress disordered. As he passed the threshold, he turned back and addressed the crowd of women who followed with increasing lamentations of “Vo! Ohone! O Vo! O Vo! Tuathal!”

“Ohone! O Vo!” he said, in a sharp tone. “O Vo and Ohone, as much as you will, but do not O Vo at me. It was not I that slew or threw in chains your husbands or your sons. Bright Bel has seen how hard I fought for them. But what could one against a multitude? Dear father,” he continued, pulling off his birrede, and laying his sword for an instant at the feet of the Ard-Draithe, “thou art a fortunate Chief Druid to behold me safe. Embrace me, and count thyself happy that it is in thy power to do so. This is it to be somewhat used to combat; this is it to

know how to wield a gen ; this it is to have the use of one's hands."

" And feet," said Aithne, at the same time making a significant gesture to Elim to begone ; the press at the door, however, rendered it impossible for him to obey.

" Ah, art thou there ?" cried Tuathal. " No matter for the feet, it would be well for others if they knew the use of either. There's one fellow I had under my hand for an hour or more. I notched his skiagh for him ; a clever fellow too, and nimble enough with the weapon : a wicked muscular rogue. Let Bel declare what a subtle understroke he used to deal beneath the skiagh. I have got three scratches here on the left arm, besides a javelin in my horse's shoulder. I never dealt with such a positive rogue."

" But thou subduedst him ?" said Aithne.

" Oh, I—I—why as to that," said Tuathal,

“let me do the rogue justice,—I did not behead him ; but we, we—both gave over fighting much about the same time.”

“And thy friends, Tuathal ?” said the Ard-Draithe.

“All slain or taken, every one,” added the young chieftain.

“By whom ?” said the Ard-Draithe, waving his hand to still the tumult which this unexpected news occasioned in the assembly.

“Some sept of Ithians, I know not which,” replied Tuathal.

“Describe the encounter,” said the Ard-Draithe ; “let us hear something of the manner of the occurrence.”

In compliance with this request, Tuathal gave an account of their incursion on a territory near the coast, and in particular of his own single-handed encounter with the young Ithian, whom

he described as a person of prodigious strength and wonderful dexterity. In the midst of this detail, and while he was in the act of furnishing a somewhat highly wrought account of his own prowess in the combat, he was suddenly struck mute, by catching the eye of Elim raised to his, and fixed upon him with a meaning which occasioned an immediate recognition.

“What ails thee?” said the Ard-Draithe, “why dost thou not continue thy tale? What dost thou gaze at?”

“Thou hast not told me,” said a woman who stood near, “how chanced it with my husband?”

“Or with my son,” said a second, plucking him by the cloak, “is he among the slain, or prisoners?”

Disregarding these instances, Tuathal still fixed his fascinated eye on Elim, and stalking across the room, exclaimed aloud, while he shook

the sword blade in his face to the astonishment of the assembly :

“ Ho, ho ! thou valiant fellow ! Is this the end of thy determination ? Thou merciless rogue, is it here at length thou hast condescended to pull bridle ? What sayest thou now ? Where is thy valour now ? and thy fierce farrah ! thou murderous minded man ! and thy cruel under-cut, thou terrible fellow ? Shall I hew thy head off with a blow, thou cruel rogue ? Who fears thee now, thou shocking fellow ? Wilt thou hunt me now with thy dog, and thy pair of assassins ? Wilt thou halloo me like a red deer through my native glen ? Wilt thou, O wicked rogue ? Shall I cut thy head off with my skene this instant ? ”

Elim looked modestly downward without making any reply.

“ Thou art silent, and thou hadst best,” continued Tuathal, “ thou art no longer cock on

thine own hill ;—thy bark was loud enough at thine own door, but here 'tis my turn. Thou most unfeeling fellow ! How thou didst hack and hew, and lay about thee ! Thou cruel persevering fellow !”

“ Peace, Tuathal ;” said the Ard-Draithe, “ was this youth amongst the party with whom our kinsmen fought ?”

Tuathal answered in the affirmative, and the Ard-Draithe commanded Elim to be brought before him.

“ I blame thee not,” he said, “ for fighting well ; nor for thy conduct here. But justice must be rendered to my people. I know thy name and rank. It is not every kern rewards a minstrel’s song with a golden dealg-fallaine. Thou art Elim, the young chieftain of Rath-Aidan ?”

“ I am ;” said Elim, assuming with the

avowal the dignity of the chieftain ; “ thy friend if thou wilt ; if not, the chieftain of Rath-Aidan still. I am the son of Conal, and the legal instrument of justice on his slayer ; the foe of Baseg, and of all who shelter or abet him.”

“ Thou mayest be Baseg’s foe,” replied the Ard-Draithe ; “ thou shalt not long be chieftain of Rath-Aidan. Thou profferest friendship with thy gen scarce dry from the recent slaughter of my children, and thy horse yet warm from the pursuit of him who is to be my successor.”

“ I acquit him of that,” cried Tuathal, hastily, “ nay, it was no pursuit. I did but go before as it were, and he, somehow, came after. It was a kind of an unintentional decoy. I only came for assistance to the Coom, seeing all our friends cut up, and he, poor fellow, I suppose, followed, to—to know where I was going.”

“Peace !” said the Ard-Draithe, “thou hast thyself to answer for the unprovoked attack that has drawn this woe upon us. But unprovoked or otherwise, the blood of Modharuith has been shed, and his great spirit shall not call in vain for vengeance. I revoke the freedom which I gave this stranger in my ignorance. Ithian, thou diest at the rising of tomorrow’s sun. Tuathal, hold thy peace, the word is spoken.”

A deep silence fell on the assembly ; many even of those who had, at first, exclaimed against Elim, were surprised at the sudden revocation of the mercy of their chief, and seeming to compassionate the youthful prisoner. The greater number, however, being friends or relatives of the slain, were gratified at the decree. The young chieftain heard it with firmness, but without any ostentation of defiance ; and remained standing erect, endeavouring to collect his

thoughts to reply. Before he could speak, however, the Ard-Draithe's niece once more arose from her place, and knelt at his feet in tears.

“Away, Aithne!” cried the old man, “put me not to the pain of denying thee, for I attest the sun, the moon, and stars, that what I have said has not been spoken in heat.”

“And will my father break his plighted word?” said Aithne, in a pleading tone. “The sun, the moon, the stars, are emblems of fidelity and truth, and shall they be attested to a broken contract? Not by thy love for me, my father, but by our honourable name, by thy untarnished age, and those reverend white locks I love so well, I conjure thee go not back of thy plighted word to night in the sight of thy children, and of this stranger. He has had thy promise, he has drank our cup, he has tasted our food, let him go as he has come, unharmed, and leave the

avenging of our kinsmen's lives, in the hands of the Being who loves justice, and will punish wrong."

"I charge thee urge me not," said the Ara Draithe, "he dies at dawn. The liberty I gave was bestowed in ignorance."

"But it *was* bestowed, my father," pleaded Aithne, looking up in tears, and with the deepest expression of entreaty, in the face of her old protector. "Revoke it not, I implore thee, my dear father! Bring not so dark a blot on thy fair repute, on such a night as this; a night devoted to the honour of Samhuin herself; that moon which thou adorest as a deity, but which I know to be only the fairest of his visible creatures."

"Rise, maiden!" said the Ard-Draithe, in manifest anger; "thou art daring to cross me thus, and far more bold to utter those last words. If I love thee as a child, it is not that I forget

thy father and his history. Arise, and leave my presence ; thou sayest thou knowest not what," he added, in a more moderate tone, observing the deep confusion with which his words had covered the kneeling maiden. " Eimhir, remove the prisoner."

The slinger approached, but Elim raised his hand, as if to solicit a pause, while he said :

" From justice I fear nothing for what I have done, in the discharge of my duty as the guardian of my people, and the protector of their holdings. Thy men came unprovoked two several times upon our lands and spoiled our kine, and we in our defence have checked their plunder. From passion this may meet the punishment of crime, from justice never. But one word I will say at parting, though it be my last. It is the curse of our unhappy isle that private passion thus for ever takes the place of public justice.

The friends of Inisfail ! Shame on the cheat ! the friends of their own mean cupidities ; the slaves of their own passions, of private revenge, of private hate and private vanity. They turn to the ends of petty interest, the power that is given them for the happiness of Erin. Such are the sons she has nurtured in her bosom, and who call themselves her lovers ! If I die, it is not for justice. Thy wildest reasoning could not impute crime to me for the defence of my people, and thou hast thyself pronounced the offering a sacrifice to vengeance. The blood of thy people rests upon themselves ; mine rests on thee alone."

"Remove him from the Dun," said the Ard-Draithe ; "let him be kept in the Caircer na Nguiall, and do thou, Tuathal, keep guard upon the prisoner."

"They told the truth then of the Hooded race !" said Elinn, in reply. "In an evening thou

hast pledged and broken faith. But there is many a soldier of the Coom in the hands of the O'Haedhas, and sorrow will await thy tribe if thou shouldst follow up the crime of Baseg."

The-Ard Draithe waved his hand, and two galloglachs approached in order to remove the prisoner.

"Kind-hearted maiden," he said, looking pale, but smiling as he passed the spot, where Aithne sat, "thou hast pleaded well, but vainly. Farewell, since we shall never dance again."

It was with difficulty Tuathal, assisted by Eimhir, and the two galloglachs, bore his prisoner safe through the crowd of women and children which beset the Dun. They pressed upon the galloglachs with shrieks and gestures of the most violent description, tearing their long hair, and beating their breasts with clenched fingers.

"Give place, ye boisterous herd!" cried

Tuathal, while the galloglachs thrust back the foremost with the butts of their battle-axes. "How would ye howl if I had fallen a victim, when ye make such an uproar for the kerne?"

THE END OF VOL. I.

B. BENSLEY, PRINTER, ANDOVER.





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